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Feature Story

UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL

By

Crittenden Marriott is the author of our next feature story, "The Silken Sheath."

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Under the Hypnotic Spell

A STORY OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

By DR. HARRY ENTON

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE PALACE OF THE SIRDAR

"PROTECTOR of the poor."

"What is it, Yusef?"

The eyes of the Pariah servant glistened with admiration as they rested on the powerful form of the young American, who was slowly putting up a hundred-pound dumb-bell with a slow, sure movement that told of well-braced muscles.

Claude Harrison smiled. His skill in wireless-work had secured him the patronage of the governor of Peshawur when the latter decided on the construction of a system of wireless-telegraphy telephony to connect the principal posts over which he ruled.

And as he stood in a room at the top of the palace, clad only in exercising trunks, he presented a rare picture of manly power. Twenty of the thirty years that had passed over his head had been much devoted to athletic sports; his tall, broad figure was just one series of beautifully developed muscles, which obeyed his wishes like so many perfectly trained servants.

Yusef, his khansama or body servant, watched appreciatively while Claude punched the bag, used the wrist-developer and devoted ten minutes to the rowing-machine. In common with the rest of the athletic outfit, these had come from New York. Yusef saw him swing the heavy indian-clubs with marvelous skill, and then, knowing from experience that the end of the morning exercise was at hand, opened the door that led into the communicating bathroom. He attached the hose that ended in a spray nozzle, and was ready for his adored young master when the latter finished with the clubs. A bath that concluded with a needle-like shower always put the finishing touch to the morning exercise, which Claude Harrison had never

once neglected since the day he arrived in the city of Cabool and assumed charge of the arduous work. It required both keen brains and reliable muscles to carry out his work successfully.

Although Cabool, in which city the palace of the sirdar was situated, lies in India, it is not a hot place, for it is 6,000 feet above the sea. When Claude Harrison had stripped off his trunks, the spray of water that was directed to his body by the khansama was almost icy, but he smiled with delight and slowly turned around so that every part of his powerful frame should be drenched. Then Ali Murdan took coarse towels and rubbed him from head to foot until his healthy skin fairly glowed.

Five minutes later Harrison, clad in a well-fitting sack suit that a New York tailor had unquestionably made for him and with his well-shaped head covered by a derby hat, walked out of the palace. He directed his footsteps toward the shop where he was superintending the assembling of the various supplies required for the work he was doing for the sirdar. As he swung along, more than one pair of bright eyes sparkled with appreciation from behind thin veiling and followed the athletic figure until it was lost to sight.

But Harrison bestowed not the slightest glance on any of the women who so openly showed their admiration, for his thoughts were of one whose blonde beauty had enslaved his heart. Thinking of Marian Clyde, his feet carried him almost mechanically to his destination.

At that time Marian was sitting in a large room on the first floor of the palace, hearing the young children of the governor recite their lessons in English and French, which she had taught them.

She was a New York girl, and had been an inmate of the governor's palace nearly two years, when Harrison came there and was lodged under the same roof with the sirdar, in order to be constantly in touch with him as the work of constructing the wireless system throughout Afghanistan went on.

What might have been expected had happened when the young scientist and the beautiful young girl met. It was a case of love at first sight, and before long they were betrothed.

The apartment that was used for a schoolroom was handsomely furnished, and on the walls were paintings by Corot, Landseer, Bonheur and a score or more of the world's greatest artists.

Any one seeing Marian would be apt to pronounce her English, for she possessed that milk-and-blood complexion most commonly found among the maidens of the British Isles. She was of fair height, with a full, rounded figure that was exquisitely moulded.

A fine-looking, dark-complexioned man of middle age stood holding apart the silken curtains that afforded the only privacy of the room. He was fairly between the clinging folds, and as his eyes dwelt on the attractive face and form of the beautiful teacher of his children, they sparkled with an evil passion.

An exclamation from one of the children caused Marian to turn her head towards the portières, and at once the dark face between the folds changed its expression.

Sunga Zilef, governor of Afghanistan under English favor, entered the room and bowed gracefully to Marian.

"Good morning, Miss Clyde," he said in the perfect English that he had been taught during his schooldays in England.

"Good-morning, excellency," she responded in the same language, although she was highly proficient in Hindustani.

"I thought I would look in and ask about the progress the children are making in their studies," said the governor, advancing and extending a hand to each of the tots, which they dutifully kissed after having made a profound salaam to their father.

"They are excellent scholars and are progressing equally well in both French and English," said Marian.

The sirdar smiled happily and seated himself on one of the several easy-divans.

"I am deeply indebted for your labors with them," he said in a refined manner, "for it will obviate the necessity of sending my dear boy away to Europe later on, and thus I shall be spared the pain of being separated from him. Since the death of their mother, some four or five years ago, my children have been my only solace, and it gratifies me exceedingly to know that I shall not be compelled to send my son to Europe, as is the common custom among the nobility of this country. Should it happen that I find another wife, separation from my daughter would not be so keenly felt."

"You are only in the prime of life," asserted Marian, at which statement the dark face of the sirdar flushed with pleasure, "and there seems to be no good reason why you should not marry again."

"I thank you for your kind words," said the sirdar. "And so you regard me as in the prime of life, do you?"

"Yes, excellency."

"And, pardon me for so personal a question, my dear Miss Clyde, but do you also regard me as an agreeable person?"

There was a degree of eagerness in his voice that the girl failed to note, or she might not have answered so fairly and squarely. In an indirect way she might have given a reply equally polite and honest.

"Why, yes," she answered; "I have always regarded you as a very agreeable gentleman."

The sirdar bowed profoundly.

"Again I crave pardon for asking a personal question," he said, his black eyes on her creamy face. "Do you think that I would suit the fancy of one of your race?"

He bent forward eagerly for the answer, but his gleaming eyes sought the floor as he waited, for he was a crafty man and did not want her to note the expression that he well knew contorted his face.

"It is difficult for me to answer such a question," responded Marian, "for such matters are controlled by individual taste. However, in a general way, I am prepared to say that you seem to me to be a cultivated man and should meet the approval of any right-minded woman."

Again the sirdar bowed.

"I feel highly flattered," he said, his dark face flushing with pleasure at the girl's words. "You have put me in a very happy frame of mind. If it will please you to listen I will sing a song in recognition of your kindness. I know that you are very fond of music, and such small ability as I possess in vocal music I place at your disposal."

Marian smiled. "I have heard that you possess a splendid voice," she answered, "and shall be much pleased if you will sing."

"Go to your playroom," said Zilef to the children, "and on your way there bid Unda come here and bring her sitar with her."

The children salaamed, and withdrew from the room.

Sunga Zilef, an accomplished man, engaged the teacher in agreeable conversation until the girl musician he had sent for should arrive.

A request from the sirdar was a command to be obeyed quickly, and in less than three minutes the portières were parted to admit a young girl of the lower Hindustani class, who carried with her an Oriental guitar.

She salaamed to the floor. "The heaven-born has sent for me," she said in the extravagant speech of the country, speaking in the Pushtu dialect commonly used by the lower classes. "What is the pleasure of the protector of the poor?"

"I will sing for the memsahib," was the sirdar's answer.

Again the girl salaamed low. "And what will the heaven-born sing?"

"'The Song of Har Dyal,'" was the response, and with an imperious gesture he pointed to the floor and added, "Play it."

He sat with his burning eyes fixed on Marian's face as Unda sank to the floor and swept the brass and steel strings in the prelude.

Unda was an accomplished performer on the sitar, and as the blended melody and harmony of the great Oriental composer's masterpiece throbbed through the room, Marian's heart was touched.

Then Sunga Zilef began to sing. His voice was a tenor

of limited power and range, but of exquisite sweetness and flexibility.

Marian felt her senses swim as she listened to the passionate words of the great Orientalist:

"THE SONG OF HAR DYAL

"The bulbul sings in the deodars
And pours out his soul to his mate,
And I, as one confined by bars,
Would sing of my love ere too late.

"The sun and the moon art thou to me;
To me thine eyes are the stars,
And never again can I happy be
Till thy voice destroys those bars."

Then he stood erect and extended his hands with a passionate gesture in the direction of the enthralled young girl.

Marian Clyde felt that there was a dangerous fascination in listening to him, but she could not break the spell in which the music held her. This was plain to the sirdar, whose eyes fairly blazed as he fixed them on the beautiful face of the girl.

Standing in a graceful pose, Sunga Zilef sang the concluding verse of the song in recitative:

"Shall a man not stand upright in the
cool of the shade and a lover in the
presence of his beloved?
If my heart fail me, oh heart of my
heart, am I to blame, being blinded
by the sight of thy beauty?"

His voice died away in a caressing murmur and Marian Clyde started as though from slumber.

She shook herself with the idea of dispelling the charm that held her senses, and a gratified expression flitted across the dark face of the governor as he noted it.

"She is snared," he muttered, and then Marian arose hastily to her feet, feeling that she had not so much been sung to as sung at.

"You have a marvelous voice, excellency," she said politely, "and I thank you very much for singing."

"And I," responded the sirdar with a low bow, "thank you for the pleasure it afforded me. Oh, Miss Clyde, it would make me very happy to know that I could sing to you for the rest of my life."

There was no mistaking the meaning of the words, and the girl flushed most uncomfortably.

"I hope to have the pleasure of hearing you sing again," she answered, and with the feeling that she must leave his presence or else be placed in a trying position, she bowed ceremoniously and left the room.

Sunga Zilef smiled, threw Unda a piece of money, and dismissed her with a commanding gesture.

"What beauty!" he exclaimed, his eyes fixed on the portières through which Marian vanished. "I shall sing to her again and again, and in a short time she will be mine."

Marian Clyde walked through the palace in a sort of dream, that exquisite voice and the passionate music of the Oriental love song still ringing through her brain. Then and there she resolved never to listen to Zilef's singing again.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SIRDAR PROPOSES

MARIAN passed an almost sleepless night. It was not alone that the words of the great poem of India came again and again, wedded to the enthralling music, to disturb her rest; she realized that her beauty had aroused a storm of passion in Sunga Zilef that had caused him to woo her with music, and as she dreaded the man she naturally feared the result.

Many tales had come to her ears about the affairs in which the amorous governor of Afghanistan had been concerned, and the mere thought that her name might be linked with his in the malicious gossip of English military circles was enough to make the pure-minded girl tremble.

Many of the smart English officers and men holding civil positions in Cabool had paid their addresses to her, with the sole result that their wives, sisters and daughters had been aroused to open hostility against Marian.

She was well aware of this. Instinct had not failed to let her know how they regarded her, and it was a foregone conclusion that a whisper of her hitherto unsullied name linked with that of the profligate governor would give her women foes an opportunity which they would eagerly seize upon to tear her reputation to tatters.

She felt that she was in a most difficult position.

This beautiful and cultivated girl had a mother, who was a paralytic depending on her for support, living in New York. Marion's brother Morton was a struggling lawyer, with a family dependent on him. He was a good fellow, but unable to contribute much to the support of the invalided mother. It was because the salary offered for teaching the governor's children was three times as much as she could earn at home that Marian had journeyed to India.

If now she quarreled with Sunga Zilef the big income she was enjoying would cease, and her mother would once more know the want of many of the comforts she now enjoyed.

Therefore Marian figured, as she tossed uneasily on her pillow, she must avoid a rupture with Zilef. She thought out a course of conduct that should prevent an open break with the sirdar, knowing that such a man could not be kept at arm's length indefinitely, but she would hold him off as long as possible; and then, woman-like, she wondered if he had noted how enthralled she was with his singing and whether he attributed her fascination at that time to the singer or the song.

"Perhaps he mistook my complete subjection to the music for love," was the thought that came to distress her, for if the idea happened to be a true surmise she felt that it would increase her danger.

When morning dawned she arose sleepless from her couch. She was still without any definite plan of action against the sirdar.

There were morning lessons to give the children, and Marian instructed Unda, who was her personal maid, to take the children to a summer-house in the garden. The maid at once departed for the children, and Marian, following a custom that had been established soon after the American wireless expert became a member of the household, descended to a small breakfast-room and there met Claude Harrison, with whom she partook of the first meal of the day.

Claude was waiting for her, and she came directly up to him and gave him her full, pouting lips.

He kissed her fondly and then held her off at arm's length and looked with unconcealed anxiety at her.

"Dearest girl, what is troubling you?" he asked, for the eyes of love are very keen where the one that is loved is concerned, and Marian's efforts with the toilet-box had not sufficed to hide the ravages of the night.

"Oh, I am foolish," she responded, "and probably am worrying about nothing."

"Tell me what troubles you?" he pleaded.

Before answering, for she well knew that the palace was filled with the sirdar's spies, Marian looked into every nook and corner of the small room. The fact that she and Claude were speaking English was not a perfect protection, for many of the sirdar's servants had at various times served under English masters and had acquired a fair knowledge of the language. She stood close to him and spoke softly:

"Claude, I trust and hope that my feminine vanity underlies the idea, but I am much afraid that the sirdar has fallen in love with me."

The young man's hands closed in a powerful grip and his face darkened with rage.

"The fool!" he ground out between his tightly set teeth. "Why, to speak of love in the same breath that mentions his name is to profane the most exquisite sentiment known to human-kind."

"I know it, Claude, and again I say that perhaps my vanity is at the bottom of the idea."

"I never knew a girl less vain. Tell me, what put the idea into your mind?"

Marian held back no longer, but told him the story of the visit of the sirdar to the schoolroom the previous day and of the song that he sang, and its effect on her.

Claude looked troubled. "I have heard many a tale of the power that some tenors exert over women, but never believed the stories until now," he said. "This man with his dulcet voice fascinated you?"

"That is exactly the right word—he fascinated me."

"But he did not touch your heart, did he?" anxiously inquired Harrison.

Marian smiled at him. "Foolish fellow," she said, drawing down his head and kissing him again and again; "the bird may be fascinated by the serpent, but the bird does not fall in love with the snake."

Claude was somewhat comforted, but what Marian had told him was enough to make him uneasy.

"I will never listen to his singing again—that I have fully resolved upon. What troubles me is what may happen from this time on," said the girl, as Claude stood with one arm thrown protectingly around her supple waist.

"You mean that he may seek you again?"

"Exactly; the fact that I am teaching the children affords him a very good excuse for intruding upon me. Claude, I have told you why I came here, and you can understand why I do not want to lose this excellent position."

"Yes, I understand that consideration for your mother creates the desire to hold on to this excellent paying position," he said; "but there are some considerations that equal your love for her and the wish to keep her in comfort."

"What do you counsel me to do?"

"Maintain a dignified attitude and permit not the slightest familiarity on the part of the sirdar. He never showed any such emotion before, did he?"

"No; in the past his deportment was above reproach."

"It is well for us to bear in mind that he is, like many of his race, of extremely emotional temperament, and when his vanity impelled him to sing for you the revelation of enthrallment on your part may well have awakened his love. Stand on your dignity with him, Marian, and this sudden passion may die out as quickly as it was born."

"I hope so," fervently responded the girl, and then servants entered with their meal and they took their seats at the table. They endeavored to forget their trouble and live only for the present and the happiness that their mutual love brought them, but the shadow of the sirdar hung over them, and they ate their breakfast in silence.

After the meal was over, Claude kissed his sweetheart good-by and started off to supervise the wireless-work he was constructing.

Marian wrote letters home to her mother and brother, and felt regret that she could not pour out her heart to the distant loved ones.

When the appointed time came for beginning instruction she walked through the handsome garden and made her way to the summer-house, where she found Unda sitting on a bench with the two children.

It was with a decided feeling of relief that Marian began the lessons, and as the moments sped by she congratulated herself on the idea of teaching the children out of the house.

However, her satisfaction soon came to an end. She was in the midst of an English exercise when a form darkened the entrance of the summer-house and a musical voice softly said:

"Good-morning, Miss Clyde."

Marian felt as though a cold hand had been laid on her heart, for she at once recognized the dulcet tones.

She stood erect, however, and bowed to him in the coldest possible manner. It flashed over her mind that Unda had betrayed her.

"Good-morning, sirdar," she said, and then turned to the children and resumed the lesson where the governor's coming had interrupted it.

She thought it possible that he would take the hint and walk away, but he soon removed that idea from her mind. He cast a peculiar glance on Unda, and the maid paled under it and then spoke hastily to the children and bade them come with her to the palace. Obediently they arose, and, taking them by the hand, Unda swept the sirdar a salaam and conducted them from the summer-house. A smile flashed across the face of the governor.

Marian felt her limbs tremble, but she summoned up her strength and remained standing, resolving that Sunga Zilef should not note her fear of him if she possibly could hide it.

The sirdar lost no time in expressing his purpose. "Miss Clyde," he said, "yesterday you were highly complimentary in the opinion you expressed of me."

Marian braced herself. "I had no idea of being complimentary," she said abruptly.

"Then you spoke the truth?"

"I always do."

"I am happy to hear you say so, Miss Clyde. I am a very lonely man."

"You have two beautiful children to comfort you."

"True, but I have no companion. My wife, who was a most sweet companion, left me four years ago."

"That is very sad."

"I have mourned her, and want to ask you if I have not, in your opinion, paid sufficient respect to her memory?"

"You certainly have," admitted Marian.

"Then, in view of the fact, as you so kindly stated yesterday, that I am in the prime of life and sufficiently cultivated and agreeable, as you also stated, to meet the approval of any right-minded woman, the world could not blame me if I married again?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, Miss Clyde, I have the honor to lay my heart and hand and such eminence as I possess at your feet."

He ceased speaking and fixed his burning eyes on her. With difficulty Marian maintained her erect position, but she faced him with what courage she could summon, and bowed low.

"You do me great honor," she said, and trembled as she realized the possible loss of her position.

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever met, and also the most cultivated," said the sirdar, feasting his eyes on her loveliness. "Should you accept me, the honor would be great indeed. What is your answer?"

His eyes half-closed as he regarded her, and he scarcely seemed to breathe as he waited with inclined head for her answer.

"Surely, sirdar, you cannot expect me to answer you now," she said evasively.

"Why not?" he softly breathed.

"You are asking me to decide a matter offhand that naturally would affect the rest of my life. It is a serious question and requires serious consideration."

"But I love you."

"That does not lessen the consideration that should be given to such an offer as you have made, sir."

"But I tell you that my love is of such an intense character that any delay in your answer would be intolerable."

"I regret that," firmly said Marian, "but it cannot be helped."

"Think! I offer you wealth, position, title and the opportunity to queen it over the English ladies who have slighted you—a fact which I have noted more than once with such pain as you would not credit. It would make me supremely happy could I aid you in paying them back in their own coin."

"All that you say is true, but it does not alter the importance of the matter and the consequent need for deliberation on my part."

"Will you answer me to-morrow?"

"Oh, no; not to-morrow."

The sirdar's face fell. "The next day, then?"

"No; I should require one week to make up my mind in a matter of such supreme importance," was the response.

Sunga Zilef uttered a cry and clutched at the side of the arbor doorway.

"You would keep me dangling, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth for a whole week?" he gasped.

Agitated and apprehensive as she was, Marian could hardly repress a smile at the tragic tone and attitude evoked by her firmly declared intention of delay in answering the enamored governor.

"I am very sorry if I give you pain," she said as kindly as she could; "but in justice to myself I must have one week."

Sunga Zilef threw his hands into the air with a tragic gesture and gave vent to a groan.

"Before the week ended," asserted he, an expression of agony on his dark face, "I should be dead. Oh, you do not understand how I love you, beautiful one. I sang to you 'The Song of Har Dyal,' and though the words were his, the sentiment was mine, for I tell you truly that

"'The sun and the moon art thou to me,
To me thine eyes are the stars.'"

As he recited the line in his musical voice it had almost the same effect on Marian that had acompanied his singing; but she shook off the feeling of fascination and held herself firmly in hand.

"Yes, more than even the passionate words of the song can express are you to me, lovely daughter of the West," he went on. "Without you the world will be but a dreary place. Oh, say that you will accept me."

"If my answer is not worth waiting a week for, then you cannot prize me so highly as you would have me believe," craftily answered Marian, speaking with such spirit as she could summon.

The governor took a step towards her, one hand extended, but Marian uttered a low cry and stepped abruptly back.

"Is this the kind of love you feel for me—a love that is totally devoid of respect?" she demanded, and, although she was shaking with apprehension, she looked scornfully in his eyes.

Instantly the expression on Zilef's face changed. His extended hand fell to his side and he was once more the courtly and polished gentleman that the English schools had turned out.

He bowed low. "I crave a thousand pardons," he humbly muttered. "Let the intensity of my love plead for me and say that you forgive. Otherwise I shall go from your presence feeling that you regard me as an Eastern barbarian."

With her splendid paying position and the necessities of her mother before her eyes and constantly in her thoughts, Marian adopted a craftiness that was foreign to her nature. Delay was what she sought.

"Since you put the origin of your offense upon such grounds, being a woman, I must forgive you," she said pleasantly.

The answer satisfied and also hoodwinked him, which was just exactly what the girl wanted.

"From my heart I thank you," he declared. "Moreover, it brings me some hope and comfort, for, being a woman, as you say, I cannot believe that you will reject love, wealth and station when they are humbly laid at your feet."

"Perhaps you are right," responded Marian, "and when I have decided, the result may prove it."

The sirdar cast up his eyes towards heaven, made a despairing gesture with his hands, bowed low and withdrew from the summer-house.

Then Marian felt her strength desert her and she almost fell upon the seat of the summer-house. The evident fact that her own maid—the one servant in the palace whom she regarded as being attached to her—had told the sirdar of the intention to give the children their lessons in the summer-house was a distinct shock. It told her plainly enough that the governor was surrounded with spies, who would aid him constantly in his suit, no matter what service was demanded of them. Marian grew sick at heart as she fully realized the danger she was in.

There was but one person in all that city of over half a million inhabitants to whom she could turn for comfort, and that was Harrison. She felt that she must see him without delay. Going to her room, she dressed herself for the street and sallied forth, looking nervously behind her. She was wondering whether spying eyes were noting her exit, and also if stealthy feet would follow her and then report her destination to Zilef.

Claude had hired a bungalow half a mile from the palace, where he could conduct his work for the governor. Thither Marian walked so rapidly that many eyes were turned inquiringly upon her. In the leisurely city few persons hastened their steps, and those only of the lower classes.

Marian found Claude sitting in a room he had turned into an office. He was working away in his shirt-sleeves at some charts of wireless installations. With an exclamation of pleasure he pushed away a pile of blue-prints and took her in his arms, but even as he bent to kiss her willing lips he noted the expression on her face.

"More trouble?" he asked. "What is it, dearest?"

Marian nestled gladly in his arms, experiencing a sense of security and comfort as she laid her head against his broad chest.

"It is useless for me to hide the truth either from you or myself," she said, a sigh of regret escaping her. "I am going to lose my position, and you know what that means to me, Claude."

"What has happened since I parted from you this morning?"

"Sunga Zilef has proposed marriage to me."

Claude released her. An expression of intense anger darkened his face and he opened and closed his powerful hands spasmodically.

"I will tear him apart!" he exclaimed.

Marian shuddered at the words, and laid her small hand restrainingly upon his arm. "Dismiss any thought of violence, I beg of you," she pleaded. "What good could it accomplish? It is no insult for any single man to propose marriage to a woman."

"It is an insult for this beast, whose reputation is well known in Cabool, to propose marriage to such a girl as you," raged her lover.

"Do not indulge in any violence," again pleaded the girl. "Remember, that he is a man of great power, and if he is also unprincipled, as I believe, that is all the more reason why you should not further arouse the beast in his nature. I would be the sufferer from it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that he would act quickly, and I might not know how to escape. Claude, I have promised to give him his answer in one week."

"Why did you defer giving him the answer that I well know is the only one you would give him?"

"Because I wanted to gain time."

"Time for what?"

"To carry out plans that I have formed. Claude, you must take me away from this city."

The lovely girl blushed as she said it, but her tone was firm.

The wireless expert looked at her in surprise, scarcely able to credit his sense of hearing. "Take you away from this city?" he repeated. "Dearest girl, do you forget that we are not yet married?"

His words brought a crimson blush to the girl's cheeks. "No, Claude," she said, "and I understand that you would be the last man to permit my name to be bandied about in English circles. There may be a way out that will commend itself to you, and I shall not be sorry to see the last of this city."

"But what can be done?" anxiously asked Claude. "It is true that with my knowledge of my profession and my general scientific knowledge I can make a living in any part of the world where my services might be in demand, but all the money I possess is what I have saved from my

salary during the past year. That would suffice to carry us away to a considerable distance from here if we were married; I would not be able for some time to put the clothes on your lovely form and surround you with the comforts and luxuries that I have fondly dreamed of."

"I understand all that," rejoined Marian, "and that is why I have put my wits to work and tried to think out a plan that should enable us to leave here as man and wife and with a comfortable fortune in our possession."

Harrison gazed at her with increasing wonder. The heavenly blue orbs that had sent amethyst shafts deeply into the soul of the governor of Afghanistan smiled up archly at him.

"Do not think me unbalanced of mind," she laughed. "I will soon convince you that there is method in my madness. Claude, do you know what religion the sirdar professes to follow?"

"No; I have always thought from certain indications that he was a follower of Mahomet."

"He is not. Have you ever heard of Jainism?"

"Yes, frequently during the past year, but I do not know anything about it."

"Well, I will not say that I know all about it," asserted Marian, "but I doubt if anybody aside from its worshipers knows more about it than I do. Jainism is an offshoot of Buddhism. Filled with blind adoration and superstition as Buddhism is known to be, it does not for an instant compare with Jainism in those respects. Educated and intelligent as we know him to be, the sirdar is nevertheless a worshiper of Jainism, and on that fact hinges the plan that has flashed into my mind."

CHAPTER THREE

MARIAN OBTAINS A PROMISE

"YOU astonish me!" exclaimed Claude.

"I suppose I do. I was dumfounded when I learned it. When you consider that he is as advanced in a general way as much as any European it is almost too much to credit that the sirdar is as completely dominated by superstition as any of the servants in his household. There is no real religion, as we understand the word, about Jainism, but only a mass of superstitious beliefs, and Sunga Zilef bows to them all. It is well known that among the followers of the cult the orientation of a house is of far more importance than the architectural character of it. The possession of a large number of plaster casts of elephants to insure good luck is more sought after than good furnishings. Sunga Zilef, as you may have noted, has not failed to have a goodly number of such casts in every room. Jainism may be described as the worship of men who have triumphed over their earthly passions and gained perfection. In the hills, not far away, are old men who live in huts of the meanest description, supported by the food brought to them by adoring worshipers. Outside the door of the hut is a bench, coming up through the seat of which are a number of nails, and these old men, who by seclusion and contemplation have reduced themselves to what might be termed a condition of auto-hypnotism, will sit down unconcernedly, not seeming to be aware that the sharp points pierce their flesh. You can well imagine the effect of such a performance on the ignorant worshipers who come to lay votive offerings at their feet. India is a land that is ruled by superstition, and the most extreme of all in that respect are the followers of this creed. On the outskirts of the city lies a temple of Jain, and there the sirdar goes to make offerings to the gods within it."

"To mere images?"

"Yes, to mere images; however, the priests of the temple are the ones who profit by his gifts. Think what a mockery of religion it is, Claude, when I tell you that young girls are found in the temple who are supposed to be wedded to the gods, but who really are the slaves of the priests. There is no such thing as sin recognized by the observers of Jainism except an insult to one of the gods, and that is punishable with death."

"What a horrible belief!" Claude exclaimed.

"Yes, it is. Now, this is the idea that has come into my head. Among the many gods in the temple is one called Krishna, the god of battle. It is a life-size figure of wax, and the belt around the waist is furnished with a dagger. The hilt of this dagger is thickly studded with jewels—diamonds, rubies and sapphires—and, little as I know about such matters, my general knowledge tells me that the stones must be worth a fortune."

"Without a doubt."

"Now, this is my idea: The sirdar is madly in love with me, and not likely to refuse me a small favor. I will beg of him to take us to the temple of Jain, and I shall trust to you to devise the means of obscuring the eyes of the priests while you secure the jeweled dagger from the belt of the god Krishna. Then it will also be necessary to provide means of safe and swift flight from the temple; that part of the plan also you must provide for."

The young man's eyes sparkled. "The plan is already formed in my mind, and I do not doubt that it can be successfully carried out," he said. "You work on the sirdar and get him to take us to the temple, and I will do the rest."

Marian clapped her hands with joy. "Then we shall be rich," she said, and as a sudden thought flashed through her brain she flushed rosy red, and added, "A rich couple."

"I hope so," said Harrison.

"But we will then leave the city as speedily as possible, will we not?" she asked.

"Yes, as speedily as possible; probably on the Calcutta Mail. That pulls out in the neighborhood of midnight."

"As man and wife?" she blushingly inquired.

"Yes, as man and wife, the only manner in which I would travel with you, dearest of girls."

"Now, I will get back to the palace and seek an interview with the governor," she said. "His household is a nest of spies, and for all I know I may have been seen coming here. It would not do for me to arouse suspicion by making a lengthy stay. Moreover, it may be necessary for me to make my request more than once, and, to use a vulgar saying, I must get on the job."

"You are quite right," assented Claude, "but still I much doubt that he will refuse you the favor you ask. Should he hesitate about the matter, you must make him understand that you are consumed with curiosity, and that you will not be happy until you have visited the temple."

"I shall know how to bring him to the point of consenting," confidently answered the girl, and then she embraced Harrison and left the building.

Her feet seemed endowed with wings as she made her way back to the palace, for she owned to an intense and absorbing love for her athletic fellow countryman. The thought that she would soon be his wife, and the added idea that they would escape from Cabool with wealth in their possession, made her light-hearted and light-footed.

Marian was a shrewd young woman, and when she arrived in her room she proceeded to array herself as becomingly as possible.

Ravishingly beautiful she looked when she had put the finishing touches to her becoming costume, and then she descended to the luxurious salon on the lower floor of the palace, clapped her hands, and at once a dark-skinned servant appeared in the doorway.

He salaamed profoundly to the girl.

"The heaven-born memsahib summoned me?" he said.

"Yes, Ali Murdan," she replied, for this was the khansama or body servant of the governor, and well known to her. "Is the sirdar within the palace?"

"He is, memsahib."

"Tell him that I wait here, Ali Murdan, and that I would have speech with him at his pleasure."

"It is well," said Ali Murdan, and with another salaam he vanished.

There were several full-length mirrors in the room, and being neither more nor less than a very human girl, Marian stood up close to one of them and surveyed herself in the plate-glass.

The reflection thrown back from the polished surface caused her to give vent to a little sigh of satisfaction, for she saw that she was entrancingly lovely. She was about to make a play for a fortune—a fortune that should enable her to wed the man she loved and to leave the city she detested.

It argued well for the success of the request she was about to make that the proud governor did not keep her waiting. Less than three minutes after the departure of Ali Murdan the sirdar stood in the doorway.

Marian was standing erect and facing him, and the sight of her exquisite loveliness made him speechless.

Holding apart the heavy silken portières, he stood like one entranced, feasting his eyes on her rare beauty of face and form. He was unwilling to break the spell, and Marian did not know that he was there until she raised her eyes and saw him.

"Good-morning, sirdar," she said, and made a bow that brought before his eyes the rounded perfections of her dainty, alluring figure.

"Good-morning, Miss Clyde," he returned, bowing low, and his voice trembled with emotion. "You did me the honor to request an interview here, Ali Murdan informed me."

"It is true," admitted Marian, enjoying the sensation she had created in the lovelorn governor. "May we not be seated?"

"I am waiting for your permission, fairest of women," faintly returned the governor, who seemed almost incapable of speech.

Marian could hardly restrain a smile.

"Be seated, I pray you," she said, bestowing a gracious smile on the governor as she sank upon the yielding depths of an ottoman and indicated another a few feet away to Sunga Zilef.

A dark-complexioned man of middle age stood holding apart the silken curtains.

The enamored governor seated himself with an apologetic bow, as though it were a species of desecration not to remain standing before the woman he had vowed to be the queen of his heart.

Unable to wait for Marian to begin the conversation, he impulsively put the question that her summons had inspired.

"Beautiful star of my heaven," he exclaimed, "have you sent to tell me that you have relented, that your eyes have seen my agony of heart, and that your soft soul has been moved to compassion?"

"Sirdar, do you refer to the matter that we had under discussion, and which I said would be settled in one week?"

"Yes, queen of women."

"No, sirdar, I do not change my mind so easily and swiftly. Were I so unstable as that I should scarcely deserve the honor you would confer upon me. Your good name and marital honor would scarcely be safe in one so fickle."

It was a clever answer and greatly pleased the governor, who gazed on the speaker with approval.

"True," he assented. "You make me realize that my honor would be safe in your keeping, Miss Clyde."

Marian bestowed a smile on him that made his senses reel.

"What have you summoned me for, then?" he asked.

"To ask a favor of you."

With the extravagance of the East in such matters, Sunga Zilef plucked for the dagger he wore in the sash that encircled his waist and extended the hilt to the beautiful American.

"Ask for my life," he exclaimed tragically, "and take it with this dagger, for death at your hands would be bliss unutterable."

Serious as the occasion was, and important as the result was also, it was difficult for Marian to keep her face composed. The act and words of the governor irresistibly reminded her of scenes she had seen on the stage in burlesque.

However, she saw in the situation an opportunity to further lure the infatuated governor, and with an assumption of interest that she was far from feeling, she said:

"Should I become your wife, Sunga Zilef, and you proved faithless to me, then indeed might I ask for that blade."

The governor smiled ecstatically.

Such remarks on her part suggested to his enraptured mind that the beautiful American was inclining in his favor, and the thought filled him with ecstasy, which was just what the shrewd girl wanted.

"Sirdar," she said, "I think I told you some time ago that I was making a study of the various religions, did I not?"

"Yes, you did."

"I have studied them all," went on Marian, seeing that she had the governor very much interested, "and have learned so much about them that I have become vain enough to write a readable book."

"I am sure you could," flatteringly said Zilef. "And tell me, fairest daughter of the north, which religion among the many did you find most interesting?"

Marian saw an opportunity to drive in an entering wedge, and she did not neglect it.

"Oh, no person of any discrimination could be in two minds about that," was her response. "Jainism presents beauties that are not approached by any of the other numerous worships."

Sunga Zilef beamed upon her. "It makes me swell with joy to hear you say so," he exclaimed.

"I was charmed with many of its features," warmly declared Marian to her credulous auditor. "As a matter of fact, I have extolled its beauties to your wireless expert, Mr. Harrison, and he has become quite worked up about some of the features of Jainism."

"You astonish me," declared Zilef.

"Moreover," went on Marian, warming with her subject and scheming cleverly as she saw how well she had caught the governor's interest, "Mr. Harrison intends to closely

study the religion, with what result may easily be forecast."

The fanatical governor radiated gratification from every line of his face as he heard this declaration.

"Do you mean that he is likely to become a convert?" he asked.

"Exactly."

"This is astonishing information. I suppose you know that Jainism has no more devoted follower than myself?"

"So I have heard."

"And you, radiant being, whose dazzling loveliness eclipses the sunlight at the hour of noon," demanded the infatuated Oriental, "is it possible that you, too, might become a worshiper of Jain."

"Yes, that is possible," was the reply, but Marian knew that, while possible, it was highly improbable.

"My heart will burst with joy!" cried Zilef. "I feel, I know, that you are going to give a favorable answer to my suit, and to think that you may share my faith gives me pleasure that is almost insupportable. Tell me, radiant one, what is the favor you crave?"

"I want you to take me and Mr. Harrison to the temple of Jain, in order that I may secure further data for my projected book, and to afford him the chance of viewing the gods of the sanctuary."

"Surely I will do so," was the prompt reply.

"Thanks, sirdar. And when will you take us?"

"To-morrow evening at eight."

"You are very kind. We shall be ready at that hour. As we proceed there, I ask that you will be kind enough to discourse upon the different tenets of the faith, so that he may be in a receptive frame of mind on our arrival, and his conversion may be effected."

"I shall do as you suggest," smilingly assented the sirdar. "To-morrow at eight my barouche shall be at the entrance of the palace."

"Again I thank you," said Marian, and rising from the divan she bowed and gave him a parting smile.

Unable to restrain her impatience to let Clyde know of her success, the delighted girl arrayed herself for the street, and once more made her way to the building Harrison occupied as his headquarters.

There she told of the conversation held with Zilef, and instructed Claude as to some of the things he must say to the governor as they rode along, in order to confirm the idea she had given of his deep interest in Jainism.

The wireless expert smiled as he listened to the instruction from his sweetheart.

"It begins to look very favorable for the scheme," he said, "and I must put in the rest of the day perfecting my plans for the getaway."

"Do you feel sure that we can get away?"

"Positive! Positive! I must now go and secure fleet horses that will rush us like the wind away from the temple when we have secured the valuable dagger. The telephone and the telegraph will enable me to arrange for our marriage at the consulate. It will also secure a compartment on the Calcutta Mail and a stateroom on a P. & O. steamer from Calcutta, soon after our arrival in that city."

"Oh, Claude," nervously exclaimed Marian, "I should never forgive myself if anything went wrong, for that would mean death for you."

"Do not fear, dearest one," he said. "We shall succeed. I feel it."

CHAPTER FOUR.

IN THE TEMPLE OF JAIN

BEFORE nightfall Claude had perfected all his arrangements.

Fleet horses, one with a side-saddle for Marian's use, were engaged to be at a certain spot within a hundred yards of the temple of Jain. The same man from whom he had hired the steeds, at a figure that made their owner smile with joy, had agreed to remove two small trunks from the palace the following morning and take them to the railway station. Ali Murdan and another servant had been liberally paid to have the trunks ready at the rear door of the palace, and to keep silence about the matter, Claude furnishing a clever and satisfactory excuse for the removal. The American consul had been communicated with, and all was arranged for the wedding. The right sort of a compartment, with sleeping accommodations, had been secured for the eleven o'clock train, and a stateroom had been bought on the P. & O. steamer that would leave Calcutta in one week from that day. With his plans all perfected, Claude felt that success was sure.

Just at eight the sirdar's handsome carriage and team drew up in front of the main entrance to the palace. Marian and Harrison were already anxiously waiting. The curvetting team had hardly been brought to a standstill when the governor made his appearance, his eagerness, in striking contrast with his usual tardy habits, bringing a smile to Marian's face.

With great courtesy he personally handed the girl into the vehicle, indicating the broad back seat, and pointing out the one that faced it to Claude.

The latter accepted the situation, knowing of the sirdar's useless pursuit of Marian. When Harrison had taken his seat the governor seated himself at the side of Marian with a sigh of satisfaction that he was unable to repress.

Then Zilef gave an order to the driver and they rolled smoothly away in the moonlight through the beautiful city.

Following the instruction he had received from his accomplice, Claude at once opened a conversation about Jainism, expressing great interest in the cult, and an eager desire to learn more about it. The fanatical governor met him more than half-way, speaking easily and intelligently about a subject that lay very near his pagan heart. Marian threw in a word here and there to help matters along and to further assure the sirdar of her interest in the creed that she really abhorred. Zilef smiled in rapture when she spoke commendingly of his fluent discourse.

Half an hour passed by, and they reached the temple, leaving the carriage outside the grove of trees in which the place of worship was situated.

It was an imposing edifice of stone before which Sunga Zilef finally halted with a reverent inclination of his body, after which he led the way up a broad flight of steps that led to the great doorway.

In the bright moonlight an inscription in Sanscrit over the arch caught the keen eyes of the girl, and she pointed it out to Claude.

"What does it say?" he asked.

"'The Temple of a Thousand Joys'," answered Marian.

Claude slyly squeezed her rounded arm.

"Let us hope that it brings no less than that number of joys to us," was his comment. Then he and the girl followed the sirdar into the broad passage that conducted to the interior. Lamps burning a perfumed oil shed a fair light over the passageway, and disclosed a dark-skinned man in the yellow robe of a priest sitting on a low bench, flanked on either side by a number of carpet slippers. The priest immediately arose and salaamed to the governor.

"Protector of the poor," he mumbled, "may your bed in paradise be soft."

"Hussian," responded the governor, "may a thousand beautiful houris welcome you to paradise."

Hussain salaamed again.

"Does the heaven-born intend to enter the holy of holies?"

"Yes, Hussain."

"And the unbelievers, protector of the poor?"

"Also, Hussain. They seek knowledge."

"It is well, heaven-born."

And then Hussain picked up a pair of the slippers, and Zilef, well knowing what was required, at once sat down on the bench and permitted the priest to remove the European shoes he wore and replace them with the carpet slippers.

"We must follow suit," whispered Marian to Claude. "To enter the inner precinct of the temple with shoes on would be a profanation punishable with death."

She at once sat down on the bench and began to unbutton her high-heeled shoes.

Claude followed her example and, taking a seat beside the girl, quickly removed his shoes and allowed Hussain to fit him with a pair of slippers. Then the priest once more salaamed to the governor and began to lead the way along the passage towards the far end, from which a glow of light proceeded.

The three visitors followed him, and in a couple of minutes passed through parted curtains and into the inner temple. More than a hundred lamps burned here, and for a moment they were blinded by the blaze of light.

Then their eyes became accustomed to the brilliant light, and they were able to look around the temple. They saw half a dozen life-size figures in various parts of the room, some made of stone and others so cunningly formed of wax as to look lifelike to the beholder.

Between the figures of the gods three yellow-robed priests squatted on small squares of carpet, their eyes closed, and an intent, absorbed expression on their dark faces.

They paid not the slightest attention to the visitors, but sat there like so many mummies, wrapped in inward contemplation.

The sirdar beckoned to his two companions, and they followed him as he made his way toward one of the life-like figures, before which he paused, at the same time putting one hand in his bulging pocket.

Marian nudged Claude.

"Watch him closely," she said, "and you will see this man, educated in England and far advanced above thousands of his countrymen, make an offering the same as the most ignorant of his subjects. He is just as fanatical and superstitious as the lowest laborer in Afghanistan."

And, true enough, Sunga Zilef drew forth a handful of gold from his pocket and laid it at the feet of the figure in front of which he had taken his stand, at the same time making a most humble salaam, accompanied by genuflexions of the body which doubtless expressed both humility and supplication. Then, with a smile, he turned to his companions.

"This," he said, indicating the figure with a wave of his heavily jeweled hand, and bending a suggestive glance on the beautiful American who had enslaved his heart, "is Siva, the God of Happiness, and I am imploring him to grant me the dearest wish of my heart."

Marian felt that she would not have needed two guesses to have fathomed what the sirdar's wish was.

Zilef moved on, beckoning them to follow him, and advanced towards a most terrible-looking figure, the wax countenance of which expressed the deepest form of contrition.

"This," he went on, "is Prayaschitta, the God of Atonement, and because I have sinned in my time I lay this offering at his feet."

Once more his hand was plunged into his bulging pocket and withdrawn with a golden store which he permitted to fall at the feet of the figure. As the gold struck the pavement with a musical ring, Claude could not resist the temptation to shoot a swift glance at the absorbed priests. He grinned slyly when he saw three pairs of eyes flash open for the fraction of a second and then close. The music of gold had power to awaken them.

The sirdar passed on to a warlike figure with a stern face and decidedly military bearing. The waist of the figure was encircled by a sash of silk, into which was thrust a short dagger, and when Claude glanced at the hilt of the weapon he almost gasped for breath, for it looked like one solid aggregation of large and small jewels which fairly blazed in the light of the hundred or more lamps. Zilef halted in front of the figure and salaamed, and then turned to his companions with a rather sheepish expression on his face, for he could see that they were thinking that he intended to make another offering, and he had no such intention.

"This," he said, "is Krishna, the God of Battle, although he is termed by some the God of the Sun. I have no intention at the present time of entering upon any warlike measure, so it is not necessary for me to make a sacrifice to this particular god."

"Will you not have the kindness to speak to those priests and beg them to inform me what initial steps I should take in beginning the study of their wonderful religion?" asked Claude, who, since his first glimpse of the priceless dagger, had not been able to take his eyes away from the tempting array of costly jewels. "I am eager to begin my novitiate, sirdar, and do not care to lose this precious opportunity to be put on the right road."

The fanatical governor smiled at hearing this, and at once approached one of the priests and bent over him.

Then Harrison turned his head slightly, so that his mouth was only a few inches from the pink ear of his companion.

"Marian, listen intently, and keep guard over your face, for I do not trust the apparent sleep of those priests. Do you hear me plainly?"

"Yes," she softly whispered.

"Keep close to me, and whatever you see or hear, do not move away from my side, so that at the critical moment I can seize your hand and be ready to rush with you out of the temple."

"You may rely on me."

Sunga Zilef was whispering softly as he bent over the priest, and that the latter heard what the governor was saying was clearly indicated by the constant nodding of his head.

Claude turned so that he could face the god Krishna, and fixed his glance on the blazing hilt of the dagger. Then he thrust his hands deeply into the side pockets of his American-made sack-coat. Marian realized that the important moment was at hand, and she could not repress a shiver of anxiety.

Harrison took one step nearer to the god, and then shot a swift side glance from the corner of his eye at the governor, to make sure that the latter was still whispering to the squatting priest. Then he withdrew his hands from his pockets and opened them.

At the same instant he fixed his eyes on the blazing hilt of the dagger, so as to be able to seize it without looking at it when he required to do so.

There came a succession of blinding flashes, immediately followed by three stunning reports, and then what looked to be three fiery serpents began to race around the floor of the temple, while a dense cloud of smoke arose that almost entirely obscured the light from the countless lamps.

Shouts and shrieks were heard from the startled priests, and Marian fancied she could hear the musical voice of Sunga Zilef crying out in wonder and asking what had happened.

With a swift and sure movement of his hand, Harrison reached forth and plucked the jeweled dagger from the silken sash. Thrusting it in one of his side pockets, he plunged a hand into the opposite pocket and drew forth a small but powerful flashlight. Holding it with one hand, he clutched Marian's hand with the other and whispered: "Come!"

Then, while the temple was still ringing with the cries of the startled and mystified priests, in which clamor the voices of Sunga Zilef could now be plainly heard, and while the fiery serpents still raced in mad rushes hither and thither across the floor, Claude flashed his electric light around. He made sure of the direction of the portal through which they had entered the temple, and then dragged the girl swiftly towards it, the intermittent flashes from the electric battery giving them all the light they needed to assure the correctness of their progress.

The moment they emerged into the passage they were in a fair light, and Claude at once thrust the flashlight into his pocket. He rushed Marian swiftly down the passage, the outcries from the interior of the temple following them, and in a moment had come in sight of Hussain, who still sat quietly on his bench with his array of slippers, although the outcries from the interior of the

temple must have come plainly enough to his ears in that silent spot.

The sight of the priest at once brought a thought to the mind of the girl, and she held back an instant.

"Claude!"

"Yes?"

"We must have our shoes."

"We will, but we will carry them away and put them on when we have more time to do so in safety."

Just at that instant there came a loud cry from within the temple, sounding very much as though all the occupants of the interior had joined their voices in a warning shout. The outcry sounded like three distinct words, and they must have conveyed important intelligence to Hussain, for he at once leaped to his feet, drew a short knife from under his yellow robe, and made a swift rush in the direction of Harrison.

Marian uttered a cry, but before she could say anything Claude had leaped forward to meet the priest. The latter uttered no word, but made a swift thrust at the American the instant he came within striking distance.

A trained athlete and clever boxer, Claude Harrison disposed of the murderous attack with consummate ease. He advanced his left foot, threw his body into an easy position, and blocked the blow. Then he drove in hard with his left fist, catching the priest on the point of the jaw, and knocking him fully a half dozen feet before he dropped to the floor of the passage like a dead man.

Without bestowing another glance on the murderous priest, Harrison made a dash for the bench and picked up Marian's shoes and his own.

"Come!" he sharply ordered, and, with the girl at his side, and tightly holding the two pairs of shoes, he ran down the passage and out into the moonlight.

There he again took the girl by the hand, and, running around the temple, he soon came to a narrow road, a mere bridle-path half hidden in the shadows cast by the great trees of the grove in which the temple stood.

"Ram Roy!" he called.

Almost before the sound of the words had died away a man emerged from deep shadows near at hand, leading two horses, one of which was furnished with an English side-saddle.

"Protector of the poor, I am here," said the man, and salaamed.

"Good!" said Claude, and then he turned to Marian and bade her put on her shoes as quickly as possible. He inclined his ear towards the temple while he hastily put on his own shoes, but no sound came from it, and a smile flitted across his face.

"They are still dazed and not a little frightened, in spite of their protestations that they live only in fear of the future and disregard everything on earth," he said laughingly. Then he turned to the waiting man, and added:

"Ram Roy, here is what will make your heart glad," and he placed a piece of gold in the promptly outstretched hand.

"Sahib, may the music of ten thousand sitars waft you into the waiting gates of paradise," said Ram Roy, and salaamed.

"Be at the rear entrance of the American consulate at the time I have named, Ram Roy," said Claude, as he assisted Marian to mount and placed the reins in her hands, "and you shall have another piece of gold like that."

"Sahib, I shall not fail."

Then Claude leaped lightly into the saddle, spoke to the horse, whom he had frequently ridden, and, with the agitated girl at his side, started off down the narrow road. Not a sound came from the temple, and Claude felt sure that they were in no danger of immediate pursuit. He waited until they were a few hundred yards from the grove, and then turned short into a broad and well-made road which he knew would lead them back into the city by a route that would bring them into the town in the immediate vicinity of the American consulate. Then he once more spoke to the horse he rode and the animal started off on a long, easy lope that carried him over the ground very swiftly. The horse that Marian rode also broke into a lope.

"Have you really got it?" asked the girl.

Claude laughed to think that she should have deferred asking the question until the temple was left far behind.

"Of course," he said. "It was too easy, Marian."

"Well, you had the advantage of dealing with men who are as credulous and also as superstitious as so many children."

"That is what I counted on. I felt sure that the explosion, the obscuring cloud of smoke, and the fiery serpents racing across the floor would scare them out of their senses. I very much doubt that they even yet know of the loss of the god's dagger."

"There was that warning shout that led Hussain to make that murderous attack on you."

"That was done on general principles. Something mysterious had happened, they did not know what, and as the sirdar was above suspicion they laid the blame for it upon us. The shouted words we heard were no doubt instructions to Hussain to detain us."

"Well," smilingly said Marian, recalling the ease with which Clyde had disposed of the priest, "Hussain did not make much of a success of the task they assigned to him. I suppose he may even now be telling them the particulars of the combat he had with you."

"I rather doubt that," said Claude. "Hussain got what is called a 'knockout,' and I very much doubt that he is yet in trim to convey much information to anybody."

An unpleasant thought flashed through Marian's brain.

"Perhaps you killed him."

"I doubt it, but even so it was while defending myself from a murderous attack, and it would not cause me to lose any sleep."

"That is true, and I only mentioned it because it would furnish a reason not only for pursuit of us here, but would enable Zilef to have you arrested even in New York, for a man could surely be brought back here on a charge of murder, you well know."

"Oh, yes, that is true enough. However, I do not think Hussain will suffer anything worse than a bad headache. But let me put your mind at ease, dear girl. Even had I killed him, do you think the priests of the temple would permit the fact to become known? Don't you see that they would have to also make known the loss of the god's dagger, and that would be altogether too injurious to their business for them to contemplate for a moment. I speak advisedly when I use the term business, for, as you doubtless well know, their so-called religion is nothing but a business, and a very good paying one at that. To practically admit to their numerous dupes that they were powerless to prevent the loss of the dagger would be equal to confessing themselves frauds. That would certainly be ruinous to them. No, you need have no fear on that score, for they can not and dare not admit their lack of power."

Conversing in such manner, they made their way swiftly and easily over the excellent road which Claude well knew, and in less than half an hour had drawn rein outside the door of the American consulate.

It was rather surprising to Marian to see Ram Roy emerge from the shadow of a gate a moment after they had come to a stop, and she realized that the man must have known of a short-cut that enabled him to travel across the city on foot to the appointed meeting-place much quicker than they could travel by the road with their steeds. Made happy by the bestowal of another piece of gold, Ram Roy salaamed and led the horses away.

Claude had timed everything so excellently that when he rang the bell at the front door the consul answered the summons in person, and after being presented to his beautiful countrywoman led the way up the stairway to his living apartments. There a servant was despatched for his wife and daughter, and within fifteen minutes of the time of entering the building Claude and Marian were made man and wife.

Then, with the kisses and congratulations of the American family heartily bestowed on her, Marian took her husband's arm and was led forth to the street, where a carriage was in waiting to whirl them away to the station for their train.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT MARWAR JUNCTION.

So thoroughly had Claude arranged everything for the various steps of his contemplated flight that within five minutes after their arrival at the railroad station the exhibition of his tickets had secured them entrance to a compartment.

Promptly at eleven the whistle blew, the bell rang, and the Calcutta Mail began to move out of the station. Claude was looking out of the window and caught sight of a man running alongside the car in which his compartment was located. For a moment the train left the man behind, and he passed from view; but he must have made a swift start, for an instant later he arrived on a level with the compartment window. Placing his hand against the ledge for support, he ran fleetly alongside, and as he did so he glanced within.

The brilliant electric light from a station-lamp blazed down on him, and his face was plainly revealed to Claude.

He could not repress a start, and at once Marian turned a frightened countenance towards him. The events of the evening had put the girl's nerves on edge.

"Oh," said Claude, "I saw a man running alongside the car. He might have slipped and been run over."

But his careless answer did not deceive Marian to the extent that he had expected it would. The shrewd girl looked keenly at him and at once read more in his face than he had told her.

"Claude, you are keeping something from me," she said. "Did you recognize that man?"

With her eyes fixed on him, he could not fib her. "I thought I did," he replied.

"It was more than a thought, Claude; it was conviction, and that was why you gave that start. Who was it?"

"It was Ali Murdan."

"The sirdar's khansama?"

"Yes."

"Claude, do you think he was sent after us by the governor?"

"No; I bribed the khansama in order to get our trunks and bags out of the palace, and it is probable that he shadowed Ram Roy when the latter took the baggage away. Knowing that it was brought here, he probably watched all trains in order to see which one we took."

"And in a short time Sunga Zilef will know that we left town together by the Calcutta Mail?"

"Without doubt."

"Oh, Claude, that is terrible! He does not know that we are married."

"He will know it in the morning, for I requested the consul to telephone him to that effect in the forenoon. I attach no importance whatever to the fact that Zilef knows that we are escaping on this train."

Under the effect of his caresses and his confident assertions that they had nothing to fear as a result of their bold enterprise, the girl became radiant and smiling and spoke only of their future happiness.

The line on which they traveled was well provided with refreshment-rooms at convenient distances, an excellent feature of the railways in India, and the happy pair ate their meals joyously as the day sued by and nothing occurred to mar the tranquillity of their progress.

"I have been looking for a telegram or a police officer at every stop," the girl finally confided to Claude with a little nervous laugh.

"You may dismiss any such apprehension from your mind for all time," confidently asserted Claude. "I feel that I am right in saying that the loss of the dagger cannot be made public, because it would shatter the faith of the idolatrous fools who support the faith, and that is a risk that the priests will not take."

"Perhaps you are right," rejoined Marian, "but I cannot think that they will be disposed to submit to the loss without making an effort to recover it."

"Perhaps you are right, but I cannot think of any steps that they could take which would be effectual."

The next night about nine o'clock the train rolled into a station that seemed to be of some importance, for there was a great rushing up and down of porters and trainmen, and amid the announcements in the native tongue, Claude and Marian caught the name of Marwar Junction in English. There was a lot of transferring between the intersecting lines, and it was entertaining for the young couple to watch it all. The night was warm, and the broad window of their compartment was open, and, with arms about each other, they stood there catching the busy scene and enjoying the babel of sounds.

Fully five minutes were consumed in making the transfers of passengers and baggage, and then the signal was given and the Calcutta Mail slowly began to make its way out of the station.

"That was quite interesting," said Marian, and resumed her seat.

They were moving slowly out of the station, and had not proceeded two hundred feet along the line, when a man rushed forward from the doorway of the station refreshment-room and dashed straight for their car.

As he reached it he was just outside the open window of the compartment, and, grasping the lower edge of the frame with both hands, he essayed to effect an entrance to the interior by crawling through the opening.

Marian caught sight of him first and screamed loudly, at the same moment pointing a shaking hand at him. Claude followed the direction of the indicating hand and saw the dark face of a native, the eyes fixed upon him with a baleful expression, and he also saw that the man, whose two hands were fully occupied in the effort to hurl himself through the open window, held the handle of a long knife between his teeth.

That was enough for Claude, and he leaped to his feet and rushed across the compartment, his powerful hands clenched in anger.

The man's head and shoulders were half-way through the opening, and he was making a desperate effort to pull himself through the window. His eyes were fixed with an expression of hate on Claude, and they offered the young athlete the finest kind of a mark. He struck out hard and true with his right, catching the man fairly between the gleaming eyes.

Back he went out of sight, and, strangely enough, he did not let go of his hold on the knife that he held between his teeth.

The train was still moving but slowly along the station platform, and Claude stood in readiness, close to the window, for it occurred to him that the man would in all probability fall on the platform and at once return to attempt entrance by the window.

But as he stood there with hands ready for another crushing blow, he heard an agonized shriek, and then came a chorus of cries from persons on the station platform, followed by loudly shouted orders, and the slowly moving train at once came to a stop.

Claude looked out through the open window and saw the native station-master and the baggage-man running up from one direction and the conductor and engine-driver coming from the other, and then he looked down and saw something dark lying immediately below him, close to the shining rail.

Up rushed the officials and halted just outside the window, and at once they lowered the lanterns they carried and swept the light around in a wide circle at first, and then, discovering nothing in that way, they came close to the side of the car and let the light fall between the side of the car and the platform, and at once the engineer shouted: "There he is!"

With his free hand he pointed down to the space between the side of the car and the rail, and there they could see a man lying. The station-master gave a quick order and the baggage-man at once lowered himself between the car and the platform.

"Hand him up," was the order, and the baggage-man lifted the still form from the ground and shoved it up through the space above him. The others grasped it when it came within reach, and a moment later the still form

was laid tenderly on the platform, just below the window. Claude took one look at it and then turned to Marian.

"Stay where you are," he said, "or what you would see might rob you of your sleep for many nights."

And truly the object, which lay on the platform, was well calculated to shake the nerves and disturb the peace of mind of a young girl.

The man was dead, and the cause of his death was plain enough to Claude as he gazed down upon him. When he fell back from the force of that blow between the eyes, he had chanced to fall between the side of the car and the station platform, and the slowly moving train had rolled his body in a tight clutch for some distance before it became detached and fell beside the rail. His head had been caught between the opposing forces and his skull cracked.

The baggage-man lowered his lantern and passed it close to the man's face as he lay on his back, and then he started and shot an agitated whisper into the ear of the station-master. The latter bent down, looked long and earnestly at the face of the dead man and then straightened up with a howl of unmistakable sorrow:

"Gautama Rishi, the priest of the Jain Temple up in the hills, a mile or more from here."

Claude heard the words, and although he was as brave a man as walked the earth, he could not repress a shudder at the moment, for it seemed pregnant with a meaning far beyond that which the mere words conveyed.

"Are you sure?" asked the conductor.

"Positive," was the reply of the station-master as he took out his handkerchief and reverently laid it over the face of the dead. "I have seen him frequently at the temple, where I go to worship. He has not been down from the hills for over a year, and now he has come only to meet his death. I wonder how it could have happened?"

"Oh, it seems plain enough," said the engineer. "He was late for the train, but it was important for him to catch it, and, seeing this open window, he thought he could get into the compartment. He must have lost his grip and fell between the side of the car and the platform in such a way that his head became wedged between them, with the result that you see."

"Yes, that seems to me to be the explanation," assented the conductor, "and when you make out your report you can state that as the probable cause of the accident. Well, it was nobody's fault but his own, and as there is nothing more that we can do we may as well get on our way."

The latter part of this speech was addressed to the engineer, who nodded his approval and walked to his engine.

A moment later the train started on its way, and then Claude seated himself at the side of the white-faced bride.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"You saw that man trying to get in through the window, did you not?"

"Yes," she shudderingly responded, "and I also saw the long knife that he held between his teeth."

"He is dead!"

"Yes?"

"He fell in such a manner that his skull was fractured and he must have died instantly. Marian, he was recognized by the station-master as Gautama Rishi, the priest of a Jain temple near Marwar Junction."

They looked blankly at one another. There was a whole volume in the few words when viewed in the light of what had happened in the Temple of a Thousand Joys. The girl shivered with terror and muttered:

"Claude, he came for the dagger!"

"Most assuredly."

"And he was ready to murder us in the effort to recover it; that is plain enough when we recall that long knife between his teeth."

"I do not doubt it, for murder to such a fanatic would be regarded in such a cause as assuring him admission to heaven."

A puzzled expression came upon the face of Marian, and then she turned inquiringly to her husband.

"But how could he have known about the dagger?"

"That's what's puzzling me," admitted Claude.

"Ali Murdan must have told the sirdar that we were on this train and could even tell him the location of the car we were in, and it would be easy enough for Sunga Zilef to telegraph the information here and instruct the Jain priest to make an effort to get into our compartment and make a determined effort to recover the dagger."

"There is a fatal objection to that supposition," responded Claude, "and that is that the station-master, who is also the telegrapher, said distinctly that the priest had not been down from the hills for over a year. No, there is not the slightest chance that he was advised by telegraph."

"Perhaps it was sent by wireless?"

"No; I have superintended the construction of every mile of wireless throughout Afghanistan, and I know that there is no such service here."

This brought them up against a stone wall, and they sat for a moment in silence, gazing blankly at each other.

The situation was decidedly creepy.

They were now hundreds of miles from Cabool, and Claude was confident that there was no wireless communication with the city. The statement of the station-master at Marwar Junction proved that no message had been received by wire on the part of the priest. Nevertheless, they had been made the victims of an attack that was intended to be murderous, if it failed through peaceful means on the part of the Jain fanatic. It was beyond question that the filched dagger was at the bottom of it all. But how did Gautama Rishi get his information? The mystery was every bit as disquieting as the attack had been.

Suddenly the girl's beautiful face lit up with a charming smile, and she turned confidently to her husband.

"Well?" he asked curiously.

"Have you any knowledge of telepathy?" she asked.

"No, I have not; but I would like to have it explained to me, for I am not one of the hide-bound skeptics who scoff at everything outside of scientific facts. Its possibilities have always appealed to me. Do you understand the art of telepathy, dearest?"

"Thoroughly, and as I intend to practise it with you it is just as well that you should be made acquainted with the rudiments of it at this time; moreover, it will serve to banish the gloomy thoughts that I can see plainly have taken possession of your mind. Now, in the first place, it is well to state that telepathy, which may be defined as the sympathetic affection of one mind by another without direct communication by the senses, is, in other words, the science of mental communication. Like stenography, it is ten per cent. theory and ninety per cent. practise. That is why such men as the priests of the temples of Jain, who spend their days in contemplation, are well qualified to become adepts in the art. They hold a large number of people under a hypnotic spell, and, thus hypnotized, they are more susceptible to the influence of telepathy."

"I see," said Claude, nodding.

"The communication can positively be effected if two persons are sufficiently able to concentrate their thoughts and observe simple rules. It goes without saying that the concentration of the receiver and the transmitter must be great on both sides, the transmitter concentrating his thoughts on the face of his correspondent and upon the words he intends to convey, and the other maintaining a concentrated receptiveness of mind. Months, and sometimes years, are necessary for success, but it surely will come. When once you have finally succeeded in establishing sympathy, then the rest is easy."

"How strange!" he interrupted.

"The one who transmits is the positive," Marian went on; "the one who receives is the negative. You must practise concentration of thought. Sit in a chair for half an hour and picture to yourself the face of the one to whom you wish to transmit your thoughts. It should be some one in whom you are deeply interested. Feature by feature, picture that face to your mind's eye. Be absolutely calm and call upon your memory for the features of your friend's face, then close your eyes and endeavor to paint that face to yourself in the darkness. You will see it by mental concentration, but parts of it will fade away, to be

recalled by mental effort time after time, until at last it will stand before you just as plainly as a photograph. This should be done time and again, preferably at the morning hour, when the mind is clearest, until finally the face of your friend or loved one can be called up in an instant at any time."

"What an interesting study."

"When this is satisfactorily accomplished, and you have become proficient in visualizing the desired face, then say to that face mentally, just as though you were uttering the words, 'I will see you to-morrow,' or, 'Come and see me to-morrow.' Keep your mind and your mental eye fixed on the face as you express the thought, and concentrate your mental eye on the countenance. As the features fade out you will see in vivid lines the message you have sent, and will know by that sign that it has reached the receiving party. Then the practise must be rehearsed for many months, the receiver practising sending and the former sender practising receiving, and finally thought transmission between the two will become a matter of easy accomplishment."

"That is fascinating," Claude said; "but what a learned little wife I have taken to my heart. I must study up in order to keep pace with you."

"Knowing the lives of meditation and concentration that the priests of the temples of Jain lead, cannot you easily understand that Gautama Rishi received a communication from the Temple of a Thousand Joys just as soon as the sirdar had informed them how to locate us on this train?"

"There is not the slightest doubt that you are correct, you wonderful little treasure," he assented. "You have solved the mystery."

The answer pleased Marian, but it made her grow grave, and her husband at once detected the shadow that crossed her face.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Telepathy knows no limits as to distance."

"You mean that thought runs out into space like wireless telegraphy?"

"Yes; distance limits the wireless communication, but there is no limit to the space traversed by thought communication."

"And how does that fact bring an unpleasant thought to your mind?"

"Why, I recall that the New York branch of the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky and her friend and chief ally Hierophant Olcott, has its headquarters in New York, the city which is our destination. Some of the members are just as fanatical as any of the ignorant dupes who worship and make their sacrifices in this country at the Temple of Jain."

"I begin to understand you. It is your belief that the priests of the Temple of a Thousand Joys will send a telepathic message to New York."

"That is right."

"Well, let them," was the sturdy response. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed, it is said. Now that I know that I shall be in danger there, I shall be constantly on my guard. Still, I will admit that it is, as you say, a very unpleasant thought. However, just as soon as possible after our arrival I will dispose of the jewels, and when that is done the Hindu crew can go hang."

The next morning found them out of the hills and traveling through a series of beautiful valleys. In regarding the passing scenery they temporarily forgot their troubles. However, they were not permitted to long forget the strange danger which menaced them on their wedding journey.

About noon the train stopped at Pambe Serang, and the welcome information was shouted out to the passengers that twenty minutes would be allowed them for refreshments.

Claude and Marian, young and healthy, were both hungry, and they gladly left their compartment and entered the refreshment-room. There a most excellent meal was served up to them. Although the time allowed for its consumption was brief, they managed to make an excellent repast. Claude paid the moderate bill, and, with Marian at his side, started to walk out of the place. By the merest chance he happened to look up as he walked away from their table towards the door, and his eyes rested on a large mirror that confronted him. Reflected in the glass he saw the form of a dark-skinned man, who was rushing up behind him, and Claude noticed that the man held one hand—the right one—behind his back. But it was the face of the man that interested Claude, for if ever human countenance expressed a murderous intention, the one he saw reflected in the mirror certainly did.

Claude Harrison thought fast and clearly. If the man behind him meant murder, then the hand he held behind his back surely grasped a deadly weapon—either a pistol or a knife, most probably the latter—and for the American to turn and try to defend himself with his fists, accomplished as he was in the use of them, would be placing himself under a handicap that might be serious in its results and, likely as not, fatal. Like a flash Claude resolved on his course of action.

He gave Marian a gentle shove that sent that astonished young woman a short distance to one side, and then came to an abrupt halt, his eyes fixed on the reflection of the man in the glass. The latter saw the move and tried to stop, but he had come up with such an impetuous rush that he was unable to do so in time to save himself. Bracing himself for the effort, Claude kicked out heartily with one leg, and so well directed was his foot that it caught the man fairly in the pit of the stomach.

It knocked him back fully half a dozen feet before he fell with a heavy thud and a scream of agony to the floor, just as voices on the platform in different languages and the signal ringing of the locomotive-bell told that time was up and that the train was about to start.

Just as the warning cry of "All aboard!" rang out, pandemonium broke loose in the restaurant, the astonished and alarmed diners jumping up from their seats and demanding to know what was the matter. Half a dozen men left the sides of hysterical women and ran to where the dark-skinned man lay on the floor, his right hand holding a long and gleaming knife, stabbing mechanically through the thin air.

Quick-witted Claude caught Marian by the arm, rushed her out of the room and across the platform, and almost threw her through the open doorway of the compartment, just as the train tooted twice and began to move.

Agitated beyond description, Marian sank down on a seat and covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Claude," she moaned, "did you see that knife?"

"No, I did not; but I suspected that he was holding one behind his back."

Then he told her all that he had seen, and voiced the conviction that the attack was meant to be a murderous one. When he had finished, Marian told him of seeing the prostrate mechanically stabbing at the air as he lay on the floor of the restaurant.

"Another attempt to recover the dagger," Marian said. "Who would dream of danger menacing in such a place?"

CHAPTER SIX

THE THREAT OF ARREST AT DELHI

"WHY," rejoined Claude thoughtfully, "when you come to think of it that is just the kind of place where we should expect to find danger under the peculiar circumstances of our flight. You heard the instant uproar and saw the confusion on all sides, did you not?"

"Yes."

"Then you can easily understand that all that was highly favorable to the scheme under way, for it is probable that the man had confederates who were merely waiting for him to make the attack, when it would be their cue to at once make some sort of demonstration that would add immensely to the confusion and excitement, under cover of which they could assist him in searching me.

while seemingly rendering me what assistance they could."

Marian blanched at the sudden idea that flashed into her mind.

"And if they wanted to make sure of their search they would have seized upon me also," she said shudderingly.

"Perhaps so," assented Claude, "but that swift and well-directed kick upset their plans and left them helpless. However, I must say that it was a clever and well-thought-out scheme, and held every probability of success. Much can be accomplished amid confusion by a few quick-acting men whose plans are well laid. From the ease with which we made our escape from the refreshment-room you can see that the plotters could look forward with confidence to getting away without hindrance. Yes, it was a clever scheme."

"Why," admiringly commented Marian, "you are not the least bit worked up about it, and yet you have narrowly escaped death. What nerves you have!"

"Yes, my muscles and nerves have been brought up to the highest possible state of perfection," he said, "and while I am not disposed to minimize the danger that I am now in, and will probably remain in for some time if your idea of telepathic communication with New York is correct, I trust to my nerves and muscle and a clear brain to defeat the attempts of my enemies. So far they have failed, although they struck unexpectedly and treacherously, and with good luck I'll continue to defeat them."

His courage and optimism were contagious, and Marian cheered up and smiled. However, they had no dull moments for many hours after that. There certainly was plenty to talk about.

From the time that they hurriedly left the refreshment-room they journeyed on uneventfully for many hours, and the following morning reached Delhi.

It was near the hour of noon when the train rolled into the imperial city of northern India, and the young couple feasted their eyes upon the magnificent palaces, the stately mosques, and the broad, well-kept streets of the former capital of the Mogul Empire. An idea, or rather a recollection, came to Claude.

"I have heard good reports about the eating at the Hotel American in this town," he said. "We have had only a few good meals since we left Cabool, so, as we have over an hour to wait here, suppose we indulge in a lunch that will seem homelike to us? I understand that one can order fried chicken *a la* Maryland, and there is a possibility that we might also be able to indulge in strawberry shortcake."

"Oh, don't make my mouth water," pleaded Marian. "I haven't seen such food put before me since I left New York."

"Then I'll try to get them for you," said Claude, and marched her out of the car and inquired his way to the Hotel American.

As they walked down the platform they were followed by a neatly dressed man of middle age, who looked as though he would be not in the least a subject of remark had he been strolling through the streets of London. This decidedly English-looking party followed them at such a distance as would not attract their attention, but he had them constantly in view as they strolled along, chatting gaily and enjoying the sights.

It was but a short walk to the hotel of which Claude had spoken, and when it was reached the latter conducted Marian to the ladies' parlor and then sought out the desk in the office and registered for dinner.

Never more than twenty paces away, the neat-looking man in the English clothing kept him quietly under observation, and when Claude turned away from the desk with the intention of rejoining Marian, he stepped forward with extended hand.

"Good-morning, Mr. Harrison," he said politely.

Claude looked up, and, although he did not recognize the stranger, he thought it probable that he had met him in the way of business, and therefore returned the salutation.

"Then I am not in error?" affably said the other, as Claude shook his hand. "It really is Mr. Harrison?"

"Yes, I am Mr. Harrison," was the response. "I do not recall that I have ever met you before."

"Mr. Claude Harrison?" persisted the other, taking no notice of the remark that the American had made.

"Yes, I am Claude Harrison," rather wonderingly responded the other, trying vainly to conjecture what it was that lay behind this questioning that evidently sought to positively establish his identity. "May I have the honor of knowing your name?"

"With pleasure. My name is Williamson, and under favor of His Britannic Majesty I hold a superior position in the police department."

It was out now, and the shrewd-looking man before him smiled as though he had stated a humorous fact. Of course, it was rather disconcerting, but Claude was not the man to lose his nerve at the first sign of danger.

"Very happy to meet you, Mr. Williamson," he said. "And to what do I owe the honor of being accosted by you?"

The police official looked admiringly at the calm face of the resolute young man who confronted him so quietly. The mention of his name and his official connection was not usually so quietly met.

"The governor of Afghanistan, the sirdar Sunga Zilef, has communicated with the department and requested that we stop you and return you under guard to his city of Cabool."

"That is perfectly clear as you state it, but in order to make out a legal case you must have something more than that, it appears to me," calmly asserted the cool-nerved American. "I am not versed in legal matters, not one hundredth part so much as you probably are, but I understand that where I now stand I am under English law. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, that is right."

"Then," Claude said quietly, "I want to ask you as one connected with the police, and therefore more or less conversant with laws governing such matters, is it not essential in making an arrest that there shall be some well-defined charge made against the alleged criminal?"

"Yes, that is true," admitted the other. "Now, is it not a fact that you were employed by the governor of Afghanistan to construct wireless telephone and telegraph outfits throughout the territory over which he rules?"

"Yes."

"So he says, and he also says in his communication to us that he placed large sums of money in your hands to purchase supplies. Is that true?"

"Yes, that is true."

"The sirdar complains that all the necessary supplies have been purchased and that there is a balance to a large amount that you have embezzled and made off with."

"Embezzled!" cried Claude; but he kept cool.

"Yes, that is what the sirdar said."

Claude took his time and carefully thought out his course of procedure, for it was necessary to put the police official at a decided disadvantage. With his mind made up, he returned to his defense.

"Now, listen carefully," he requested. "I gather that you are practically using the verbiage of the sirdar's communication when you say he alleges that he entrusted certain sums of money to me to make purchases."

"That is entirely correct."

"And that with all the materials purchased there remains an amount of money which I have failed to return to him."

"True."

"Then," triumphantly went on Claude, "if that is true, you must see that it is at most a breach of trust, and that if there is any proceeding possible on the part of the sirdar it lies in a civil action against me and a demand for an accounting."

He ceased speaking and looked coolly at the official, who was very evidently taken aback by this statement of the legal aspect of the case, which Claude, little as he knew of such matters, was satisfied stood upon perfectly sound premises.

"Well," Claude went on in that same cool and polite

manner that had characterized him from the beginning of the contest of wits, "what have you got to say to the proposition I have advanced?"

Williamson looked admiringly at this self-possessed young man, who was coolly wriggling out of a very nasty predicament and shifted uncertainly from one foot to the other while he considered the matter.

"Well," persisted Claude, "am I right?"

"Yes," rather reluctantly admitted the other; "I am constrained to say that I think you are."

"Very good. Then there is no criminal charge against me?"

"None on which you can be held," was the answer.

"Then I am free to go about my business?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. Now, I want to say that you have been very polite and gentlemanly about this matter when it was in your power to make matters exceedingly unpleasant for me, and I am grateful for your consideration. I was married a few days ago in Cabool, and am now on a wedding trip to Calcutta with my wife, who is now waiting for me in the ladies' parlor. We have stopped off here for a good American meal at this hotel, and nothing would please me more than to present you to my wife, a most beautiful and accomplished woman, and to have the honor of your company at the meal, of which we are about to partake."

He paused and looked inquiringly at the official, who smilingly inclined his head and signified his acceptance of the invitation. Claude at once took him cordially by the arm and conducted him to the ladies' room, where Marian had been for some time, a prey to the wildest and most uncomfortable apprehensions.

The girl's rare beauty and wit fascinated Williamson, who was all smiles when he walked with them to the dining-room, where they sat down to a meal. When it was finished Williamson said with a smile:

Harrison reached forth and plucked the jeweled dagger from the silken sash.

"Others in my office probably saw the communication from Cabool as well as myself," he said, "and in order to make sure that you are not put to any further trouble I will do myself the honor of seeing you off on your train. The mere fact of being in my company will guarantee you immunity from any possibility of annoyance."

Claude thanked him sincerely for his consideration, and a little later the three left the hotel and walked to the train, which soon started off, the enchanted official shaking hands warmly with Claude and keeping his eyes fixed on Marian's lovely face till the last. Then the girl, who was, of course, totally ignorant of what had taken place, turned an inquiring gaze on her husband, and, after he had lighted a cigar, Claude took great pleasure in telling her how he had escaped arrest. Marian was overjoyed, and complimented him highly on the cleverness with which he had escaped the clutches of the law.

"The sirdar is persistent," she observed.

"That is to be expected," said Claude. "He took us to the temple and is therefore held responsible for the loss of the dagger. We may expect that on that account alone, aside from the fact that he is just as much a fanatic on the subject of Jainism as the lowest servant of his household, he will leave no measure untried to recover it. He has tried violence and now he is trying craft, and he has been beaten every time. If my luck holds out he will continue to come out defeated in this battle. I have the feeling in my bones that we shall reach New York with the god's dagger in our possession."

"We deserve to now," fervently said Marian; "but, Claude, promise me that you will be constantly on the lookout for danger."

"I promise," he said, and there the matter rested. Their latest escape from trouble made them very happy, and their conversation was gay as they rolled swiftly on their way.

No further mishap awaited them on the line, and they reached Calcutta feeling happy and confident of success. It was late in the afternoon when they reached the great city, and they at once rode to the pier and boarded their steamer.

They had scant time to doff their traveling clothes and change to evening dress when dinner was served. Claude was thrilled with pleasure when he saw the sensation Marian created among the passengers.

After dinner he left her in the company of some ladies, with whom she had struck up an acquaintance with the ease that obtains in such matters on board ocean-going craft, and repaired to the smoking-room to indulge in a cigar.

While sitting there smoking, it occurred to him that he would like to feast his eyes on the dagger which had placed him in such deadly peril, and when his cigar was smoked out, he went to his stateroom, which happened to be on deck.

He let himself into the room, closed and carefully locked the door, and then took the small hand-bag in which he secreted the treasure he had purloined from the Temple of Jain, placed it on a table directly under the overhead electric light, opened the bag, and drew forth the prize.

It was wrapped up in a large silk handkerchief, and when he had unwrapped it and held it up so that the electric light fell upon it he was dazzled by the blaze that met his eye. The central jewel was a diamond of great size and remarkable purity, and when Claude looked steadily at it he felt that its brilliance made his senses swim.

How long he sat there he never knew, but he awoke with a start and found himself sprawled over the table. He hastily took out his watch and glanced at the time.

"Ten o'clock!" he almost shouted. "Why, it is over two hours since I left Marian, and the dear girl will have imagined all sorts of things in that length of time."

He leaped to his feet, let himself out of the stateroom and hastened to rejoin his wife. He met her coming up the companionway stairs, an expression of concern on her lovely face.

"Oh, Claude, where have you been?" she demanded. "I have been in an agony of apprehension for the last hour. What we have passed through has made me constantly apprehensive for your safety."

"I am ashamed to say that I fell asleep," he told her.

"Oh, then it is all right," she said in a tone of relief. "I can understand that you are much affected by the strain

of the past several days, and that puts you in a somnolent condition without a doubt. As it is a fine evening, suppose we promenade the deck for a time?"

Claude willingly assented to this proposition, and they paced the deck for half an hour, after which they retired to their stateroom.

"Claude," said Marian, "do you know that we have been in such a rush since we left the temple that I have never had a glimpse of the dagger?"

"Then you shall have one now," asserted her husband, and, going over to one corner of the stateroom, he lifted up the bag and placed it on the table.

Unlocking the bag, he opened it wide, placed his hand inside and began to feel around for the precious dagger. He did not find it, and with an exclamation of impatience he turned the receptacle upside-down and dumped the contents on the table. Then he and Marian began to search among the various articles, lifting each one carefully and putting it to one side.

"It is in a silk handkerchief," said Claude, and he carefully assisted Marian as she went on with the search.

Not once, not twice or three times, but fully a dozen times did they lift each article from the table and lay it carefully on one side as they proceeded with the search, but they could not find the god's dagger. They paused from the vain quest and gazed blankly at each other.

"It certainly is not here," said Marian. "Are you sure that you put it in this bag, Claude?"

"I am certain of it, and also certain that it was wrapped up in an old silk handkerchief. As a matter of fact, I found it in the handkerchief when I came here to the stateroom this evening."

"Oh, you were here?"

"Yes, and took the dagger out of that bag and had a look at it, for which I was longing, as you also were. Then I fell asleep and found, on looking at my watch, that I had been away from you for over two hours, and I hurried out at once."

He picked up the bag, examined the lock, which worked perfectly when he used his key, and showed plainly that it had not been tampered with. Then, under the powerful electric light, Claude examined the outer surface of the lock with a very strong magnifying-glass.

"Not the slightest scratch on it," he announced.

"Then," said Marian, "where is the dagger? Is it possible that after you took it out of this bag and inspected it you put it away in some of the other bags, or else in one of the trunks?"

"I do not recall doing anything of the kind," responded Claude; "but as this uncertainty will not let us rest, suppose we unpack all the rest of the outfit and carefully search through each piece in order to solve the mystery?"

"It is the only sensible and satisfactory thing for us to do," responded the girl; "but as we are both somewhat upset over this mysterious matter it would be wise on our part, it seems to me, to examine one piece of baggage thoroughly at a time. Then we can put that over on one side of the room as finally disposed of, and then take another one, and keep on in that way until we have thoroughly inspected each receptacle. In that way we will avoid confusion and arrive at a certainty."

"I agree with you," assented Claude, and then they pulled a large hand-bag over, close to the center-table, unlocked it, and began to go through the contents in a careful and systematic way, laying each article on the table until the bag was empty.

No dagger. They repacked the bag and laid it on one side, as Marian had suggested, and then tackled another of the many receptacles and put it through the same careful and painstaking examination, and with exactly the same result as with the first one.

It took them over an hour to complete their examination of the bags and trunks. When their labors were concluded they sat at the table and stared blankly at one another.

"It is not in this room," confidently said Claude.

Great as was their loss, it could not be helped by staying up all night, and between two and three o'clock they prepared for bed. They were in a very warm latitude, and as the upper portion of their deck stateroom-door was provided with a lattice-work of wire for ventilation, Claude drew back the hinged half-door that covered it and then drew up the shade that insured privacy to the occupants of the room from possible inspection on the part of persons walking on the deck. Then they went to bed. From habit, they left the electric light burning, Marian being too much shaken by the events of the past week to face the prospect of sleeping in the dark.

Claude was awakened by the rays of the sun striking full and strong across his eyes. Had he been clear-headed it would have caused surprise, for he had carefully drawn the curtain before retiring; he was not in the slightest degree clear-headed, but very much in an opposite condition. In fact, his head buzzed and throbbed, and when he sat up in bed he reeled and fell back, unable to remain erect.

He was a heavy man and fell with sufficient force to jar the couch on which they lay, and, bewildered as his senses were, he mechanically turned his head as he lay there and glanced at the sleeping woman at his side, dimly aware that his heavy tumble should have aroused her.

She was sleeping soundly. He did not like the heavy character of her respiration, nor did he think that her face had its naturally healthy color. With an effort he managed to get out of bed and staggered across the floor until he reached the washing-stand. Holding on to the fixture with one hand, he turned on the cold water until the basin was more than half full. Then he bent down, still clutching the sides of the marble for support, and plunged his head into the cold water. He held it there for fully a minute, feeling his brain grow clearer and clearer with the passing of each second, and then he withdrew it and rubbed his hair vigorously with a towel.

That made him feel much better yet, and as he finished rubbing he recalled the fact that he had been awakened by the sun striking across his eyes, and, instinctively looking towards the door, at the same time thinking it was probable that the spring on the roller had released itself during the night and permitted the shade to close, as sometimes happens with those self-rolling devices, to his utter surprise he saw that the shade had been cut with a knife—a clean slash a few inches in length—and that it was through this gaping slit the sun had awakened him.

He looked away from the cut shade and gasped with astonishment.

The night before, after he and Marian had gone through the various pieces of baggage in their vain search for the dagger, they had carefully relocked each trunk and bag and placed them all on one side of the stateroom.

Now they were all opened to view, some lying on their sides and some on end, all evidently having been opened and their contents scattered in confusion all over the floor.

Claude felt dazed, but he instinctively glanced at his wife and recalled that neither her breathing nor her color had struck him as natural when he looked at her before leaving her side. He was quite clear-headed now, and it flashed through his mind that whatever had affected him had similarly affected her, too, and inasmuch as cold water had helped him he resolved to try it on her.

Thoroughly wetting a towel with the cold water, he laid it across her white forehead and placed the soaking ends alongside the temples. The effect was prompt, for the girl opened her eyes, looked up, and tried to smile at him; but it was a very feeble attempt.

"Buzzing and ringing in your head, dearest?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is it growing clearer?"

"Every second."

"Lie still for a couple of minutes, let the cold water do its work, and you will soon be all right."

She obeyed him, and, wetting another towel with the cold water, Claude repeated the application, with the result that a moment later Marian sat up in bed and smiled naturally at him. Then she glanced around the room and gasped, her eyes resting on the overturned trunks and bags and noting the confused mass of things that littered the floor.

"What does it mean?" she cried.

For part of his answer Claude pointed to the cut in the shade. His wife grew very pale.

"I think I understand it all," said Claude. "Our headaches and mental confusion come from the fact that we were both drugged while we slept. It is probable that some sort of vapor was blown into the room through the wirework some time after we retired. I should say that the shade was cut in order to permit some spray nozzle to be introduced into the room from the outside, after which it would be easy for the person outside our door to work a bulb and atomize enough drug to insure sound sleep on our part. By the way, don't you smell something peculiar in the air?"

Marian sniffed up sharply and then nodded her head in a confident way. "Yes, it smells like carnations," she said.

"The odor tells us nothing," he said, "but as we have had no carnations in the room, it certainly was introduced since we went to sleep."

CHAPTER SEVEN

MARIAN HEARS THE WANDERING MINSTREL AGAIN

MARIAN slipped from the bed, put on a kimono, and walked over to inspect the cut shade and the slashed wirework. She exhibited a detective instinct by closely inspecting the wires at the bottom of the opening that had been cut in the lattice-work and carefully held up half a dozen threads of some silk-like fabric which adhered to some of the sharp points.

"Look," she said. "These threads were torn from the clothing of the man who made his way into our room last night after first drugging us with some vapor that has the scent of carnations."

"Exactly," assented Claude, "and then, with the light of the electric to assist him, he made a search through every one of the bags and trunks, having plenty of time to look over everything. Well, we know who are our enemies since we left the Temple of Jain with the god's dagger in our possession."

"And it means that some of our enemies are on this steamer, determined to regain possession of that dagger."

"No doubt; but if they got it last night they were much more successful than we were," grimly said Claude.

"We are up against brains, money and a fanatical courage," asserted Marian as she proceeded to dress, "and we will need all the wit we both possess to come out ahead in this fight. Have you noticed any men who looked like natives of the land we have just left?"

"Yes, there are two or three who frequent the smoking-room and are supposed to be princes of India traveling to England to acquaint themselves with manners and customs there. I do not doubt that one of these fellows paid us a visit last night and rummaged through our baggage."

"I can't help feeling that you will ultimately recall what you did with the dagger," said Marian; "and perhaps, in view of the visit made us last night, it is fortunate that you mislaid it."

Then Marian stood perfectly still, with her hand to her head, and Claude could see that she was thinking deeply.

"What is it, dearest girl?" he asked.

"Just a fleeting idea that flashed through my brain and then sped away, as ideas sometimes will. Give me a moment and I will try to bring it back."

She wrinkled her pretty brows in the effort to recall the treacherous thought that had vanished like morning dew in the sun, and suddenly her face lit up with triumph.

"I have it," she said. "The idea came to me that you might have acted in what is called a somnambulistic state and made way with the dagger."

"But if so, and your idea may be correct, what have I done with it?" despairingly said Claude. "It certainly is not among our effects here. And if I have made way with it, what have we gained by that fact when we do not know where I have put it? It is just as much lost to us as though I had cast it into the sea. Oh, Marian, I am afraid that our fortune is gone."

"Well," said the girl, throwing her arm fondly around his neck in an effort to cheer him, "we have youth, health and each other, and therefore we are not to be considered poor."

At the breakfast table Claude pointed out the two natives of India to Marian.

After breakfast one of the men visited the office of the wireless operator and sent the following message:

"SUNGA ZILEF, Cabool, Afghanistan:
"Searched room thoroughly. Found nothing.
"RUNJET SINGH."

Within an hour he received the following answer:

"RUNJET SINGH:
"It must be on his person. Get it.
"SUNGA ZILEF."

During the morning, while the young married couple were sitting on deck in their steamer-chairs, Runjet Singh came forward with two native servants, held a low-toned conversation with them, pointed out Claude, and evidently gave them an order.

That evening Claude smoked his cigar in the smoking-room with other gentlemen, and then conducted Marian to the stateroom and told her that he would have to walk the deck for an hour or so in order to get rid of his surplus energy and prepare himself for sleep. With a warning to be on the lookout for danger, she bade him go.

The night was misty and unpleasant, and the deck was deserted. For over an hour Claude paced restlessly up and down. His thoughts were on the mysterious disappearance of the god's dagger which he had risked so much to obtain. So absorbed was he in thought that he forgot the caution that had lately become habitual with him, and therefore failed to notice the two shadowy forms that crept up behind him on slippered feet. Suddenly he was seized from behind, both arms being grasped at the same moment, and then realized that two men had clutched him.

The athlete did the right thing. To have shaken off the two men would no doubt have been an easy matter for a man of his immense strength, but it is probable that before he could have struck a blow he would have felt cold steel between his ribs and been at the mercy of his assailants. Bracing himself, and setting himself firmly on his heels, Claude whirled short around with great rapidity, revolving with all his force and speed. With the act the two men at once stood out from him at right angles. They were unable to withstand the terrific centrifugal force generated by the spinning movement and flew off within ten seconds.

One of them struck with a crash against a mast and fell to the deck, while the other went in an opposite direction and banged his head against the top of the companion-way. Claude stopped his revolutions and bent over the one who lay at the foot of the mast. He kicked him in the ribs with the idea of eliciting a grunt, but there was no response, and he crossed over to the other one. Here he repeated the test with the same result. Understanding that he had nothing further to fear from them, he strolled nonchalantly away to his stateroom, feeling that he had worked off sufficient surplus energy to enable him to sleep. However, he had to tell Marian about the encounter, and then they sat down to talk it over.

"Did you know them?" asked Marian.

"No, I can't say that I knew them, but they looked like the servants I have seen in attendance on the Indian princes, and I do not doubt that one of their masters ordered them to attack me."

"There could have been but one object in the attack," said Marian.

"Of course; the dagger."

"And that brings us face to face with another fact, and that is that, as you so confidently asserted, they did not get the dagger when they rummaged through our baggage."

"That is positive. They have not got it, and neither have we."

"But I feel sure that we will have it again. Whatever you have done with it is now the deepest kind of a mystery, but sooner or later your subconscious mind will recall the fact, and then we shall regain possession of our lost fortune."

"I hope so," sadly said Claude, and there the mysterious matter was permitted for the time to rest.

From that hour, however, Claude was on his guard every instant, and when he paced the deck at night Marian insisted on walking with him, and they both kept a constant outlook for danger.

However, the rest of the voyage was uneventful, either because his enemies feared this always ready athlete or because they had received orders which changed the plan of attack against him. Neither Claude nor Marian felt lulled into any sense of security by the cessation of activities against them. Both knew in their hearts that the fanatics from whom they had pillaged the god's dagger would never relinquish their efforts to recover it, and that no crime would deter them from making the attempt. Therefore they really had no peace of mind despite the fact that days went by in security, and Claude felt a wave of pity sweep over him when he saw the shadow on the beautiful face of his wife. "Poor Marian," he said, taking her in his arms and kissing her fondly, "what a frightful honeymoon you have had."

"It is just as much my fault as yours," she said, "for I hatched the scheme and you carried it out. Don't blame yourself."

"I wish to Heaven I had never seen the cursed dagger," fervently asserted the grieved husband.

"You'll sing another song when we get it back," smilingly said his wife.

When they were within a hundred miles of Sandy Hook Claude sent a wireless message to Morton Clyde, Marian's brother in New York, giving him the time of their expected arrival. The next morning they steamed into port, and, with a cry of joy, Marian recognized her brother standing on the dock and waved to him.

The lawyer was waiting for them at the foot of the gangplank, and with pardonable pride the young bride introduced her husband and brother. The lawyer's eyes brightened as he heard the bridegroom's name.

"Claude Harrison?" he said.

"Yes, I am Claude Harrison."

"Usually referred to as Claude Harrison, junior?"

"That is right."

"And you are the nephew of Claude Harrison of West Sixty-fifth street?" the lawyer asked.

"Yes."

"Then I have news for you," went on the lawyer, and though he seemed trying to assume a solemn expression there was a surreptitious grin at the corners of his mouth. "Your uncle died about a week ago."

"Well, we were not on friendly terms, for I was altogether too independent to suit his ideas of what a nephew should be," said Claude, "but for all that I am very sorry to hear of his death."

"I will endeavor to temper your grief," said Morton Clyde, and now there was a most unmistakable smile on his face. "I suppose you know that he was considered a very well-fixed man?"

"So I have always understood," said Claude, "but as the matter didn't interest me in the least I never bothered my head to find out what he was worth."

"Well," rejoined Morton Clyde, "my firm attended to all his legal business, so I know all about his financial status. He was worth between a quarter and a third of a million."

"He couldn't take it with him," carelessly said Claude.

"He did something better than that. In all probability your independence with the old fellow was the best course you could have pursued, for I have the will and know positively that he has left it all to you."

Claude ejaculated something that expressed his astonishment, and Marian was human enough to clap her hands with joy.

"Then," she said, turning with a radiant smile to her husband, "after all we are rich."

Claude nodded, too much affected by the intelligence to speak, but the lawyer turned to Marian with an expression of inquiry on his face. "What do you mean by 'after all'?" he asked.

"Call a taxi for us," broke in Claude, "and as we are riding along I will tell you what that means."

A few minutes later the three were seated in a machine and rolling uptown to the home of Marian's mother and sister, the latter having expressed a desire to call on them with her husband without delay. As they rolled along their story was told to the lawyer.

"What a strange tale!" he commented when the story came to an end. "And the very strangest part of it is the uncanny disappearance of the dagger. You say that you were looking at it alone in your locked stateroom and believe that you fell asleep while doing so?"

"Yes," responded Claude. "I certainly remember looking at the dagger, and I as certainly remember waking up and looking hastily at my watch, and being dismayed by the discovery that I had left Marian with strangers for two hours or more. After that I never saw the dagger again. What became of it is a mystery that my wife and I have vainly tried to unravel, but one fact stands out like a signpost at a crossroads, and that is that it is not in the possession of the emissaries who were put on my track to recover it. If they had possessed it they would not have made the search of the stateroom, nor would they have caused me to be attacked when I paced the deck alone on that misty night."

"That is soundly reasoned," assented the lawyer, "but what you have told me has given me an idea, and it is possible that later on I may be able to point out a way to get trace of the dagger."

"Well, I am a rich man now," said Claude, "and certainly do not need what sum the sale of the jewels in the hilt of the dagger might bring me, but I have just this sort of feeling about the matter. I feel that I have been through such danger on account of that dagger that only the fact of regaining possession of it could repay me for what I have gone through."

"Well, it is only the most vague idea that I have in my head at the present moment," said Morton, "but I shall give the matter a great deal of thought and it may bring results later on."

"Oh, I hope so," fervently said Marian. "As Claude says, there has been so much danger incurred on his part, and so much suffering on mine, that only the fact of regaining possession of the dagger can repay us. There is mother and sister at the door."

The taxi stopped, and a moment later the happy girl was kissing her mother and sister and introducing her husband.

There was a spare room for them in the neat suburban cottage that furnished a home for Marian's mother, and Claude accepted an invitation to stay there for a few days while the elegant house that had been left to him by his uncle was being furnished in more modern style and put in order for him and his happy wife. So Morton bade them good-by and rode away in the waiting taxi, assuring the young couple that he would give much time to thinking over the mystery of the lost dagger.

It is doubtful that any of the three who rode away from the steamer would have thought of such a thing as being followed from the pier. They therefore failed to notice that they had been trailed by a handsome touring-car which ever kept the humble taxi in sight, and which came to a stop half a block away when the taxi pulled up at the home of Marian's mother.

Claude had promised to call on Morton the next day to attend to some formalities which had to be observed in order to put him in possession of his late uncle's wealth, but this day he made up his mind to enjoy to the utmost. The next morning Claude went downtown to keep his appointment.

It was a mild day in summer, and Marian sat talking over various matters with her mother and sister, when through the open windows of the room came the sounds of sweet music from the roadway that ran past the door

of the suburban cottage. The moment the dulcet sounds saluted their ears the three women stopped talking. They were all fond of music, but Marian was gifted with that finely adjusted appreciation of tones which gives their possessor the most exquisite enjoyment of the highest grades of music. It was a violin which was being played outside the gate, and peering out she saw a dark-skinned man who looked and was dressed like a gypsy standing there, his head bent to one side while he cuddled the fiddle beneath his chin and swept the strings with movements that were absolutely caressing.

"What wonderful music!" exclaimed Marian as the man came to the end of a tender cadence and held the fiddle and bow by his side. "Many of them are wonderful natural musicians, and that man has fire and pathos, too, in his brain. I am going to pay him and he will probably play more for us."

"Do," urged her mother and sister, who had also enjoyed the beautiful music drawn from the violin by the strolling player. So Marian wrapped up several coins in a piece of paper and, standing on the steps of the cottage, threw the little package with so true an aim that it fell at the feet of the itinerant musician, who bent down, picked it up, and bowed low in thanks. Then, without examining the paper to note the amount of the pay, he briefly tuned his strings and then stood up with that same caressing attitude addressed to the instrument that one sees only in the born artist, and began to play.

Marian went into the house again and sat down with the others, and for fully a quarter of an hour the strolling player gave them such a musical treat as they had seldom enjoyed.

She had been thrilled with the art of the strolling player, and for some time after he had gone she sat there trying to recall the mysterious melodies he had so charmingly educed from the violin.

Meanwhile Claude had been putting in busy hours with Morton Clyde, for after disposing of the matters connected with his late uncle's will he turned to the lawyer and said: "Morton, I want your experienced help for a day or two to prepare my late uncle's house for Marian. The dear girl has had nothing but trouble since she married me, and I want to make matters easy and pleasant for her. As you are familiar with your sister's likes and dislikes, and are credited by her with the possession of good judgment and taste, please accept the commission of getting the house in order for her homecoming. Never mind the expense, but get everything satisfactory and send the bills to me. I want the dear girl to have a short rest before entering upon the cares of housekeeping, and therefore look to you to look out for everything needful."

"You are a good fellow," was Morton's comment, "and I shall execute the commission you have placed in my hands to the best of my ability."

And the result showed that the commission had been entrusted to exceedingly able hands.

That greatest of all magicians, Money, had indeed accomplished marvels in a very brief time. Three days later Claude Harrison conducted his bride to the mansion lately occupied by his uncle. He entered upon the care of a most up-to-date establishment, the servants of which seemed able to anticipate orders before they were given. Marian was speechlessly delighted, and her approval of all she saw raised her husband to the zenith of bliss and brought a grin of satisfaction to Morton's face.

Even while viewing the perfectly appointed rooms of the mansion she found herself unconsciously humming a melody, and at once it flashed through her mind that she was subconsciously recalling one of the tunes the strolling player had played so fascinatingly. She fell to wondering if she would ever have the felicity of hearing him play again.

Claude left her to attend to some business, promising to return in good time for dinner, and Marian resumed an inspection of the many rooms, gloating over the artistic treasures with which Morton had filled them.

She had reached the second story of the house in her joyous pilgrimage when the sound of a violin being played in the street caught her ear. At the time she was standing in a front room, and at once she ran forward and threw up the window so as to be able to hear more distinctly.

Then she glanced below, into the street, and an exclamation of pleasure escaped her when she caught sight of the same dark man cuddling his beloved fiddle under his chin and sweeping the strings with a movement of the bow that seemed to caress them. Spellbound, she stood at the open window and drank in the strain of the exquisite melody he was playing. It was something dreamy and tender that he was playing, but when he glanced up and saw her he at once changed to another selection.

Drums and trumpets, the booming of cannon, the sharp crack of musketry, the orders of commanders and even the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying came from the strings. Marian felt her heart pumping madly in her bosom, her temples throbbing with the pressure of blood, and her breath come in short gasps as she listened to him.

He ceased playing, looked up again at the window, where she stood with a rapt expression on her beautiful face, and bowed low.

The delighted girl took a piece of gold from her purse, wrapped it in paper as she had done before, and threw it out to him. Holding his fiddle and bow in one hand, he deftly caught the money with his free hand, again bowed low to her and walked away.

For over an hour Marian sat in the room like one in a dream, trying to recall the martial melody which had so thrilled her, and inwardly expressing the hope that the gypsy musician would come to her door again. To her finely attuned ear and unusual musical perception the melodies he played were more than mere tunes. They spoke to her in words as well as in notes, and the pleasure she felt in listening was something that could only be understood by one as musically gifted as herself.

Meanwhile Claude was having an experience of his own that was no less strange than that through which his wife had passed.

He had transacted the business that had caused him to leave Marian, when as he approached the corner nearest his home he was stopped by a man of middle age and respectable and even refined appearance, who politely said:

"If this is Mr. Harrison I wish to have a word with you."

CHAPTER EIGHT

CLAUDE FALLS INTO A SCIENTIFIC TRAP!

THE appearance of the stranger who had so politely accosted him was of such a character as to inspire confidence, but Claude had met with so many strange adventures in the past few weeks that he had become extra suspicious, and he now looked long and keenly at the other.

However, the man looked so very respectable and had so little of the appearance of a plotter that he felt no suspicion of his intentions.

"I am Mr. Harrison," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I am not sure," was the response, with a peculiar little laugh, as though the other felt embarrassed, "and, as a matter of fact you may not be willing to do anything for me, but it is the hope that you will that I have ventured to accost you in the street. Do not think that I exaggerate the figure when I estimate the fortune left by your late uncle at something in the neighborhood of a third of a million."

"That is about right," assented Claude, wondering what was coming next.

"Well, went on the other," you may not know that the bulk of this money was made in fortunate speculations in Wall Street."

"I know nothing about that."

"Nevertheless, it is the truth. My name is Adamson, and I was the broker in all his transactions in the Street. He was exceedingly honorable in his dealings with me, and as he was a very wealthy man and did not quibble about

amounts due me for commissions I never had any hesitation in carrying him when he was temporarily embarrassed and needed tiding over a period when it was necessary to put up margins to save his investments. I have only to add that his death was sudden and afforded him no time to settle up his business, and he died owing me nearly ten thousand dollars."

"I know nothing of this," said Claude.

"I understand that perfectly," said Adamson. "My books, however, will assure you that I am stating the truth. Now, it occurred to me that you would not care to have me sue his estate for the amount due me, and therefore I have ventured to stop you and bring the matter to your attention. I live but a short distance from here, and if you will give me ten minutes or so of your time I can prove to your satisfaction that my claim is a just one."

"Well," responded Claude, "I do not want to be annoyed with a lawsuit, and therefore I will go with you now and look into the matter."

While walking along, Adamson regaled Claude with stories of some of the more daring plunges the late Claude Harrison had made in speculations, narrating some big hauls and also telling of some narrow escapes from disaster. He was well up in his subject and told his stories well, and his auditor listened with deep interest to the recital. They fetched up in front of a nice-looking house in a respectable street, and the broker drew forth a key from his pocket and ran briskly up the steps. He unlocked the front door, threw it wide open, and stood politely aside for Claude to enter.

The latter walked into the hallway; Adamson followed, closed the door, and then advanced.

"I make one of the parlors my office," he said, and with this announcement threw open the door of the rear room.

"Here we are," he said, and he and Claude entered a plainly furnished room, in the center of which was a flat-top desk, flanked with two chairs, one in front and the other behind. It all had a very business-like appearance, and when Adamson seated himself in the chair behind the desk and motioned for his visitor to take the one in front, the latter promptly sat down.

The chair had arms on the sides, and in the most natural manner Claude allowed his hands to fall on them.

Adamson shot a quick glance at him and then pulled open a drawer as though with the intention of taking out an account book. As he did so a soft whirring sound was heard and Claude's fingers, resting on the arms of the chair, clutched them tightly.

Trained scientist that he was, and dealing daily with matters in which some sort of electric current was used, Claude instantly realized that a powerful current had been liberated and was flowing through the arms of the chair, which evidently were of metal, cunningly disguised to resemble wood, with the result that his fingers were strongly contracted.

Claude thought fast. His hands were tightly fastened to the arms of the cunningly constructed chair, and he feared that in a short time the powerful current would paralyze his entire body. There was but one thing for him to do, and that was to endeavor to free himself from the chair before that happened.

With an effort he stood up on his feet, delighted to feel that in spite of the current that was imprisoning his hands he was still able to stand. As he got upon his feet Adamson leaped up from the chair in which he had been sitting and rushed around the desk.

"Give in!" he shouted. "You are fairly trapped and cannot free yourself."

As Adamson rushed around the desk he shouted out something which the prisoner did not understand at the time, but which an instant later he recognized had evidently been some sort of an agreed upon signal.

Adamson made a rush at Claude, his hands uplifted as though with the intention of striking the visitor down, a matter that under the circumstances would have been easy of accomplishment; but Claude was ready for him.

He set his heels close together, just as he had done when he attacked on the deck of the steamer at night, and timed his next movement accurately. Just as Adamson was within two feet of him Claude pivoted swiftly and forcibly.

Adamson saw the danger he was in and tried to evade it, but his attempt came too late to save him. One of the legs struck him on the head, and down he went in a heap, senseless.

At the same moment the door was flung open and two men rushed into the room with cries of surprise. Claude did not wait for them, but instantly ran forward, with the chair sticking out behind him.

With perfect muscular control and cool-headed deliberation Claude ran on, estimating just to what point his own speed and the rush of the others would bring them.

The men came to a stop at exactly the point where Claude had estimated that their rush and his own advance would bring them, and one of the fellows drew forth a short, deadly looking club of the life-preserver pattern, but he had no time to use it. Claude was whirling once more, and very close to him, and the ugly weapon met one of the legs of the chair and was knocked from his hand.

At the same moment the whirring sound which had persisted from the moment it started suddenly ceased. Something had become disconnected as a result of the violent blows the chair had sustained, and the powerful electric battery ceased to work.

Instantly Claude's contracted fingers let go their hold, and the chair fell to the floor.

With the cessation of the current Claude felt that he was more than a match for his enemies. He hit out right and left, catching them fairly in the face, and down they went.

Claude's blood was up and he felt that he would have been pleased to see it out with the men, especially with Adamson; but he did not know how many more men were in the house, nor could he foretell what new dangers he would be called upon to meet. Thinking that discretion was the better part of valor, he rushed out through the open doorway of the room, darted down the hallway, flung the front door wide open and ran into the street.

With his head buzzing with thoughts, he made his way home, thinking over the cleverness of the scheme that had so nicely trapped him.

As he went up the front steps of his handsome house, a dark, well-dressed man rang the bell at the basement, and the door was opened a moment later by the important-looking English butler.

The butler glanced appraisingly at the attire of the visitor and found much to approve of in the rich dress of the caller. The latter was evidently a man of means, and that recommended him vastly to the butler.

"Well, sir?" inquired the latter.

"Is this Mr. Singleton?" asked the caller politely.

The question was answered in the affirmative.

"My name is Rodriguez," said the other, "and I am a Cuban planter temporarily residing in New York. If you will oblige me, I would like to have a few minutes' private conversation with you."

To have a man of evident wealth and standing request a few minutes' private conversation with him was pleasing to the big-feeling butler, and he bowed low and stepped aside. "Please come this way," he requested.

He led the way to the back of the hallway and into the butler's pantry, and the visitor followed him. There the latter sat down in one of two chairs in the small room and Singleton took the other.

"I will state my business at once," said Rodriguez. "You are probably aware that your present employer recently came from India?"

"So I have heard," assented Singleton.

"While in that country," went on Rodriguez, "he became possessed of a curious dagger, the hilt of which is studded with jewels. Have you ever chanced to see the article in question?"

"No, I have not."

"That is quite natural, for it is to be assumed that your

master possesses one of the modern safes, and that would be where such an article would be kept for safety."

"Yes," said Singleton, "he has a safe."

"Very good; Mr. Singleton, I want that dagger."

"And if so, why do you come to me?" asked the butler, showing a very natural degree of surprise.

"Because I am sure that you are the man who can get it for me, if you are well paid for the work."

"I do not understand you," said Singleton, and he looked narrowly at the man who had made such a peculiar proposition.

"You say that you do not understand me," softly said Rodriguez, "and that might be true if you really were Thomas Singleton."

Again he favored the butler with another piercing glance, and the man gave utterance to a gasping sound that brought a smile to the quiet face of the visitor.

"The fact is, however," went on Rodriguez in his quiet but very impressive tone of voice, "that you really are Thomas Harvey, one of the most dangerous burglars ever turned out as a long-time student to London cracksmen."

The butler turned deadly pale.

"Moreover," continued Rodriguez, "it happens that you owe a great many years' service to the British government, the balance due on your conviction when you were so fortunate as to make your escape from the penal colony at the celebrated Botany Bay. It is useless for you to deny this, for I have your record down as fine as a hair and could cause your arrest, identification, and return to England within twenty-four hours if I so desired."

Not a word said Singleton, but stared helplessly at the man who faced him so calmly and confidently, a smile on his face.

"You will be well paid for your work," said Rodriguez, "for the dagger has a false value on account of certain matters associated with it that would hardly interest you to recite. Do you see your way clear to get it for me? As a further inducement to urge you to tackle the job I will promise you the sum of ten thousand dollars when you put it in my hands, and, moreover, you will save yourself from the clutches of the police."

"Now, it occurs to me," went on the butler, "that if my master has a liking for such things he may have more than one dagger in his collection, and you had better describe it to me."

"That is right. This dagger has a short blade and a very heavy and broad hilt, and in the hilt there are set no less than twenty large rubies and emeralds in a triangle about a diamond that weighs fully twenty carats."

At this glowing description of the stones in the hilt of the dagger the butler sat up straight and some of the color came back to his face and his eyes sparkled brightly. Rodriguez looked at him keenly with his small, scintillating eyes, and grinned knowingly.

"I can read you," he said. "The idea has flashed into your mind that you can get this dagger from the safe and keep it for yourself. Banish the thought, for it is a vain one. If you had the dagger in your hands you would pry out the precious stones and take them to leading jewelers, and with some plausible story to account for possessing them you would try to dispose of them, and you would only get into trouble. Every jeweler of prominence in the world has a book in which such stones are described, the manner in which they are cut, a description of their color and their exact weight, and identification would be an easy matter. You would be detained with the promise of purchase after a further inspection of the jewels, and meanwhile the police would be quietly telephoned for, and within a few minutes an officer would tap you on the shoulder and start you on your way to Botany Bay.

The butler emitted a groan, as though he had viewed a fortune in prospect and had then seen it snatched from him, and Rodriguez, reading his man with his small, brilliant eyes, laughed in his face.

"Well, is it understood?" he asked.

"Yes," assented the butler in a crestfallen voice.

"Good; remember, you are to be paid the sum of ten thousand dollars in cold cash, not in a check that might later make trouble for you, and you will also serve your own interests, for as surely as you failed me so surely would I hand you over to the police and at the same time I would put into their possession the record that I have taken so much pains to collect concerning your former life. When will you make the haul I have mentioned?"

"If I have to do it," returned the butler, "the sooner I get the job off my hands the better. If matters look favorable for me to-night I shall have a try at the safe."

"Such an expert as I know you to be cannot fail," said Rodriguez confidently, and, rising from his seat, he produced a cardcase, drew forth a card and handed the pasteboard over to the conquered butler. "You will find me at that address and I shall be waiting for you from the time I leave here until some time during to-morrow morning. I shall look for you to ring the front door-bell of my house between midnight and morning, and I will open the door for you myself. Within ten minutes after you place the dagger in my hands you can leave my house with ten thousand dollars in your possession."

"I hope so," said the butler, and then he conducted his visitor to the basement-door and let him out of the house.

Meanwhile, Claude had been telling his wife of the clever trick which had come so near to making him a helpless prisoner, and Marian sat white-faced and trembling as she listened to the story.

"It was a shrewd scheme," said Claude, "and the operators showed such cleverness that it is surprising that they should have overlooked one small but important detail which led to their defeat. If they had fastened that

Reflected in the glass, Harrison saw the form of a dark-skinned man rushing up behind them.

chair down to the floor I would at this moment have been a prisoner and at their mercy. Still, I cannot help smiling to think that my own ignorance of the whereabouts of the god's dagger would have defeated them just as effectually as their oversight in regard to the chair."

"But living in this atmosphere of constant danger is going to ultimately make a nervous wreck of me," protested Marian. "Had we not better leave this city and travel far away from here?"

"Can you say where we would be free from the plots that are constantly being hatched against us? You tell me that the membership of the Theosophical Society is world-wide and that telepathy, which is the means of communication practised, knows no limits. Would we be any safer, say, in San Francisco than we are in New York?"

"I fear not," sadly returned Marian.

It was the most absorbing topic of conversation for them, and after dinner they sat in their room talking matters over, connected with the dagger, until it was time for them to go to bed.

It was shortly after midnight when the butler walked softly into the front parlor, where a handsome safe stood in one corner. Only a small light burned in the room, but it was sufficient to show the man the location of the safe, and he quickly crossed the apartment and halted in front of it. Then he produced a flashlight, knelt down before the safe, and flashed the light on the lock of the dial.

For fully two minutes he studied the numbers on the dial and then bent over so that he could place one ear close to the lock. Then, resting his left arm against the safe and leaning his head on that arm, he placed his slender finger of the right hand against the dial and began to turn it.

After a while he gave utterance to an exclamation of impatience and stood up and looked at the tips of the fingers of his right hand, and an odd expression flitted across his face.

"I've been too long out of the business and I've lost my acute sense of touch that made me a kingpin among my class," he said. "What I need is a good rub with sandpaper, but where am I to get that at this hour? Well, if I can't get what I need, then I must find a substitute."

He looked all around the room as though seeking something that would serve his purpose, and a grin overspread his face when his gaze rested on the marble mantel.

"There's my sandpaper," he said, and, crossing the room, he came to a halt before the mantel. Standing close to the mantel he extended his hands, palms upward, and rubbed the tips of his fingers under the coarse surface of the marble. From time to time he paused to inspect the tips of his fingers, and finally nodded his head as though satisfied.

Back he went to his work, and after once more inspecting the figures he had jotted down, he seized the knob, inclined his head and ear as before, and seemed more satisfied with his progress.

For over a quarter of an hour he worked silently and patiently, and at the end of that time an expression of triumph flashed across his face.

"Now for a ten-thousand-dollar haul!" he exclaimed, and, seizing the knob, he gave a hearty tug and the door swung outward.

Letting go the knob, he turned the glow of his flashlight into the interior of the safe and began inspecting the different compartments. None of the latter were locked, and with a feverish haste he began to draw forth their contents and throw them on the floor at his side. One after the other he emptied the different compartments and then stopped and turned the flashlight on the heap of articles that had accumulated from the different receptacles.

"That's queer," he remarked, and holding the flashlight so that the rays fell directly on the heap, he began to paw them over. Then, one by one, he separated them and looked down on the result.

"It's not here!" he exclaimed.

"What is not there?"

The question was shouted out, and the butler leaped in alarm to his feet as Claude strode into the room and looked at the open safe-door and the heap of stuff lying where it had been thrown after being taken out from the different compartments.

With one immense bound Claude reached the astonished man and seized him by the back of the neck. Then he shook him as a terrier might shake a rat, and the fellow's teeth clashed together.

"So," said Claude, you combine your occupations, do you? Butler and burglar, are you? Tell me, you thief, for what were you looking? The truth, you villain, or I'll batter your head against the wall."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of the threat, and the butler hastened to stammer, "A dagger, sir."

"So I thought," grimly said Claude, "and I can understand that you were employed to find it and were probably assured a handsome reward for your work. Now, let me assist you to retire, and if I find you in this house in the morning I'll hand you over to the police."

With his iron grip on the man's neck he marched him to the open doorway, let go his hold, stepped back a couple of feet, and then planted a hearty kick where he thought it would be most effective. Singleton flew forward and upward, fell on his face, scrambled to his feet, and fled up the stairs, while Claude re-entered the parlor, restored the different articles to the safe, relocked it, and then, with his nerves unshaken, went up to bed.

CHAPTER NINE

UNDER A MUSICAL SPELL

THE eyes of love are keen, and Claude had not failed to note the fading color in Marian's cheeks and the dark rings that began to show under her beautiful eyes. He realized that the constant anxiety in which the fanatical worshipers of Jain had kept her for a long time was having a natural effect, and that her nerves were near the snapping point. With this picture before his eyes he thought it wise to keep the story of the butler to himself, and left the house the next morning without saying a word to her about it.

It was about ten o'clock when the sound of music in the street brought the wandering gypsy violinist to Marian's mind. She ran to the window and looked out hopefully, only to draw back with an expression of pain on her face as the harshly scraped notes of a blind man in the street below outraged her finely attuned ears.

At that moment her maid entered, holding a letter in her hand which she at once gave to her mistress.

"A District Telegraph messenger brought it, madam," she said, "and he is waiting below for an answer."

Much agitated, and feeling sure that something more had happened to her husband, Marian tore open the envelope and read the following, written in a neat hand on plain paper:

"UNKNOWN LADY:

"Twice I have played for you, and the pleasure I saw in your face was as nothing to the enjoyment I experienced in performing for one who betrayed such fine musical sympathy and understanding. It is difficult for me to make you understand the pleasure it afforded me to see the rapture on your face which I had called forth with my music. But perhaps you can understand what joy it must be to one with the soul of an artist to realize that with his skill he can awaken the most exquisite sentiments that the Almighty has bestowed upon human beings. And that was done by my street music, not to be compared with the strains with which I will salute your ears if you will come with this boy to the home of

"THE GYPSY VIOLINIST."

But a moment before she had said that to hear the wandering minstrel play again she would gladly journey a thousand miles, and now it seemed that he was close at

hand and longing to indulge in a musical pleasure that seemed to be mutual. Had she been in a calmer mood, and less on edge than the events of the past few weeks had made her, Marian might have paused to reflect, and reflection would no doubt have showed her that the step she contemplated taking was a blind plunge that might be fraught with unknown consequences of a most dangerous nature. But she was in no condition of mind to reflect. Only the lure of that mysterious music which the strolling player drew from his fiddle with a skill that was almost uncanny possessed her, and with an impulsive gesture she turned to her maid. "Tell the boy that I will be with him in five minutes."

"Yes, madam."

The maid withdrew, and Marian, all impatience, hastily selected a hat for the street, and without waiting for the maid to return ran downstairs and to the front of the hallway, where the uniformed messenger was waiting.

"You are waiting to conduct me to the gentleman who gave you the note?" she asked.

"Yes, lady."

"We will start at once." And they did so.

After walking for five minutes or so the boy came to a halt in front of a respectable-looking house which bore this sign fastened alongside the main front door:

"DOCTOR MEAH."

Eagerly Marian ran up the front steps and pressed the button she saw at the side of the door. It opened at once, moving back noiselessly on well-oiled springs, and at the same moment the girl's ears were saluted by sweet music that seemed to invite her to enter. Nobody was to be seen, but Marian accepted the implied request of the open door and the music and walked into the hallway, and the door swung to silently behind her.

Now, with the noise of the street shut out by the closed door, she could hear the music plainly. She stopped short and inclined her head. It was a most delicious melody that was being played on a violin, and she at once recognized the masterly touch of the gypsy minstrel. The music seemed to come from somewhere above, and as though it had been a voice calling to her, Marian walked softly forward and began to ascend the stairs.

Up she went, the lure of the distracting melody luring her on without giving her a moment for reflection. When she had reached the top of the stairs she saw an open doorway a few feet farther on to the right, and like one in a dream she walked toward it. She reached the door and raised her eyes. The gypsy player, as she called him in her mind, stood in the center of the room, his fiddle cuddled lovingly under his chin and the bow sweeping the strings with that caressing movement which drew forth such bewilderingly sweet tones.

Had Singleton been present he certainly would have recognized the player as the alleged Rodriguez who claimed to be a planter from Cuba temporarily residing in New York. But Marian only saw the remarkable artist who had twice fascinated her with his skillful playing of the violin.

Her heart beat rapidly, the blood seemed to tingle and dance in her arteries and veins as she stood there with her head inclined, her eyes fastened on the player who seemed oblivious to everything except his own music.

The melody he was playing seemed to be copied from the sweetest throated songbirds, and had Marian been listening to a flock of nightingales she could not have listened to more ravishing notes than the remarkable player drew from a violin that was as remarkable as himself for its qualities.

Charmed beyond description, Marian stood near the door, her eyes fastened on the performer and her delicate ears drinking in the music, her body swaying in unconscious rhythm with the delicious strains.

The player finished a long cadence, and his eyes, small and briliant as two diamonds, flashed up in a fleeting glance at the enthralled face of the girl.

A smile of satisfaction lighted up his dark face as he noted the expression on the beautiful countenance of his auditor, and lifting his bow he swept the strings in the opening bars of another selection.

It seemed that the musician had been waiting for just such an evidence that the girl was deeply touched, for he at once changed from the plaintive melody that had brought the tears and began to play something which seemed to utter a succession of commands. The music he now discoursed was not in the slightest degree of a military character, but seemed endowed with the very spirit of domination. Marian felt that it robbed her of the ability to resist, and subordinated her will to that of the man.

Then he spoke, low and clear, and the language in which he addressed her was the pure Hindustani used by the upper-class natives with whom she had conversed when she resided in Cabool. Exquisitely modulated, and yet endowed with a carrying quality that brought the merest whisper plainly to her ears, and with the music of the violin making a most effective obligato, he said: "I am an adept, such as you learned to know in my native land, and it is given to me to know that your heart and mind have been touched by the music that has come down to me through the ages. The music I have played has brought the tears to your eyes and wrung your heart with sorrow for the woes of unknown sufferers, and now I command you to subject your will in obedience to my mystic domination and tell me that which I would know."

Still playing that astonishing melody that kept ringing in Marian's ears like a succession of the most imperious commands, and with his brilliant eyes fixed unwaveringly upon the girl, he spoke on: "Daughter of the West, you have committed a crime that merits the most terrible death that human ingenuity could devise; not in ignorance, but with a store of learning that made you fully aware of the quality of your act, you conducted your lover to the temple of Jain, and there caused him to lay sacrilegious hand on a god of the Temple of a Thousand Joys. Now, with your will subjected and obedient to mine and your body in my power to serve as suits me, I command you to tell me where the dagger of the god is at the present time."

Marian trembled from head to foot and stood there before him the picture of most helpless misery.

"Speak!" he commanded in a harsh tone.

"I do not know."

"I cannot believe you. The intrinsic value of the dagger is tempting you to withhold the truth, but your avarice shall not prevail, for the dagger must and shall be delivered up. Daughter of the West, I tell you that death is stalking at your side and the side of your husband. At this very moment he is in deadly peril, and if I do not send a telepathic command to spare him his life will be forfeited before the hour is out, and that message shall not be sent unless you reveal the whereabouts of the dagger."

Unable to comply with the request of the brilliant-eyed musician, and placing implicit confidence in the statement about the peril in which her husband was at that very moment, Marian, wrought up to the highest pitch of nervous tension by the events of the past ten minutes, felt her brain reeling and her limbs giving way beneath her.

Between her and the mystic there was a long Turkish divan, and fearing that she was falling backward and liable to strike her head against the polished wooden floor of the hallway, Marian staggered forward and, with a choking sob, threw herself face downward on the divan.

CHAPTER TEN

IMPRISONED BY BANDS OF STEEL

UNWILLING to further add to the strain that he could plainly see Marian was laboring under, and yet feeling that he must make known his experience with the butler to somebody, Claude took a trip to Morton's office and there told his brother-in-law of the mid-

night attack on the safe. Morton listened attentively and, at the conclusion of the story, said:

"Had the dagger been in the safe that fellow would have had it."

"Without doubt. I feel that if it were in my possession my persistent and very brainy enemies would have recovered it ere now. By the way, what about that idea you had in reference to making me remember what I did with it?"

"The man I had in my mind when I said that will return to the city to-day, and then I will call in his services. He is one of the cleverest hypnotists in the world, and if anybody can get on the track of the lost dagger he can. Now tell me what Marian said about the butler, for the story must make her nervous about the rest of the servants."

"The poor girl has become such a nervous wreck that I did not dare burden her mind with any further information."

"If she is in such a condition I feel that I should see her and say whether she looks as though she needed the care of a skillful physician. Suppose we take a run up to your house?"

Claude assented to the proposition, and they at once left the office for his home. When the house was reached Claude let himself and Morton in at the front door and at once ran up to his wife's room. Not seeing her there, he at once rang for the maid, who quickly appeared.

"Marguerite, where is your mistress?"

"I do not know where she went, sir."

"Is she out?"

"Yes, sir; a District Telegraph boy came here with a letter for her about an hour or so ago, and after reading the letter, which seemed to greatly excite her, she put on her hat and left the house with the boy, who had waited below for an answer. I think that is the letter lying yonder, sir."

The maid pointed across the room to where an open letter lay on the floor, and with a rush Claude secured it. He rapidly perused the peculiar contents and then handed it over to Morton, who read it carefully through to the end and then turned to the other with an anxious expression on his face.

"I don't like it," he said, "for to me it bears all the earmarks of a trap."

So Claude thought, too, and he turned abruptly to the girl.

"Do you know where the messenger came from?"

"No, sir, but I know that the number on his cap was twenty-two."

"That will do," put in Morton. "If he is not stationed at the nearest District Telegraph office they can tell us where he is."

"Then let us go there at once," said the anxious husband, and they left the house without further delay. There was a District Telegraph office a few blocks distant, and there Claude asked for messenger number twenty-two, and a boy who was sitting on a bench was called forward. To stimulate his memory Claude gave him five dollars and then said: "Where did you conduct that lady an hour or so ago to whom you delivered a letter and then acted as a guide?"

"It was to the house of a doctor. I can't remember his name, which was a very queer one, but here is the address."

And taking up pencil and paper the boy wrote out the desired address, which Claude put in his pocket with a feeling of mixed hope and relief.

"What now?" asked Morton.

"Back to my house," was the reply. "The letter which lured my music-loving wife away was written by a man who knows much about music and who, if he resembles the rest of my enemies, is a person of scientific attainments. I have at home something which may be of material aid when used against the work of such a man."

Back to the house they went, and ten minutes later came out again, Claude now holding on to a strap that supported a solid-looking wooden box about two feet square. They walked rapidly to the address written down by the messenger, and both looked curiously at the sign on the door, which latter suggested to them what immediate course they should pursue in order to obtain a peaceful entry to the doctor's house. Claude pressed the bell button, and the door was soon opened by a maid who looked inquiringly at them.

"Doctor in?" asked Claude.

"No, he is not."

"Well," said Claude, consulting his watch, "he made an appointment for me to demonstrate this battery about this time, so I'm sure he will come home soon. We'll wait."

"All right," said the maid. "Walk in."

They followed her along the hallway, and she conducted them to a waiting-room and vanished. A moment later they heard her clattering footsteps as she ran down the kitchen stairs. Then they arose to their feet and softly tiptoed through the hallway and reached the only other room on the main floor, and saw that they were in the doctor's office. The place was not tenanted, and without delay they once more tiptoed their way out again and ascended the stairway to the floor above. When they had reached the top of the flight they saw a door a short distance away on the right, and to this they made their way.

While Morton turned the knob the athlete stood ready to meet any attack from within, but when the door had been thrown wide open and they could see inside there was no hostile force to meet them, but instead they saw Marian lying on a divan a few feet away.

Into the room they went, and Claude softly closed the door behind him and as silently turned the key in the lock.

Then they both advanced toward the divan, and they could not repress a cry of wonder at the sight that met their gaze.

Marian was lying face downward on the divan and was firmly held down by very broad bands of steel that coiled up from beneath the divan and circled over her body and limbs. She was unconscious, and Claude thought at first that she was dead. A close inspection showed him that she was breathing, and he gave vent to a sigh of relief. Then he and Morton bent down and closely inspected the imprisoning bands of steel.

They were evidently part of a steel framework upon which the softer parts of the divan were superimposed, and they came up from two sides of the divan, and not only coiled closely about the victim, but their ends overlapped, strongly reinforcing their terrible hold. Three pairs of bands coiled about the limbs of the unconscious girl, one strongly encircled her waist, two more pairs closely enveloped her abdomen and chest, and a final pair clutched her shoulders.

"What a terrible device!" gasped Morton, looking down pityingly on his sister. "It will take hours to file away those powerful bands, and the greatest care would have to be exercised in order that she might not be harmed, so closely do they clutch her."

"We may find a speedier and a less dangerous way of effecting her release from their grip," hopefully said Claude, and as he spoke he put down the heavy square box he had been carrying and removed the strap. Then he opened the box and Morton saw what looked to him like the top of an electric battery with neatly coiled wires lying on top. Claude turned a few adjusting screws, then took the loose end of a wire and touched it to one of the steel bands, at the same time anxiously inclining one ear toward the top of the box.

At the instant of contact between the wire and the steel band there at once came a soft but clear musical note from the interior of the box. Claude pointed across the room to where an open piano stood, and then spoke to Morton.

"Are you a musician?"

"A fair one."

"Then," instructed Claude, "sit down at that piano and wait for instructions."

Wonderingly Morton seated himself at the instrument

and Claude once more touched the wire to the steel band, his ear inclined as before.

"I think it is B-flat major," he said, as the clear note rang out again from the interior of the box. "Now, Morton, put your foot on the soft pedal, and while I get that note again strike the chord of that key as softly as you can. It must be very soft, for I want to hear if it blends perfectly with the note from the box, as that is the only positive means of identifying the key. Ready?"

"Yes."

Again the wire was applied, and as the clear, bell-like note softly sang through the room Morton struck the desired chord. The blending was perfect, and a gratified smile appeared on the face of the wireless expert.

"That settles it," he said. "Those steel bands are all finely attuned to respond to that chord, and when the vibrations set up molecular action in them they respond to a law that is well known to wireless inventors and coil over and contract as you see them now."

"But that will not release Marian," despairingly said Morton.

"No, but reversing the current that contracted them will do so," confidently asserted Claude. "It is simply reversing a musical influence that affects these steel strands. Now place your foot on the loud pedal and strike the chord of B-flat minor and watch the result."

At once Morton obeyed, striking the desired chord firmly again and again with his foot holding down the loud pedal.

Instantly there came a soft whirring sound, and when Morton turned around on the piano stool he saw all the powerful steel bands curving up from the imprisoned form of the girl. Up and still farther up they came, and as he continued to repeat the chord they curved over reversely from their former inclination and finally disappeared beneath the divan.

"Wonderful!" was his comment.

"Simple!" said Claude, and then he lifted his wife from the divan and kissed her a dozen times on her rather pale lips. Marian at once opened her eyes and smiled up in his face.

"Dear Claude!" she said.

At that moment the main front door of the house closed with quite a bang as though somebody had entered hastily, and Claude at once leaped to his feet.

"Look out for Marian," he said to Morton. "That is probably the doctor, but we are going out of this house, and a dozen men are not going to bar my way."

Morton picked up his sister from the divan, held her easily in his arms and, with flashing eyes, Claude unlocked the door and led the way out of the room.

"The box!" warningly said Morton, who had conceived a very high opinion of the value of the contrivance that had so quickly effected the liberation of his imprisoned sister.

"I can make another one," said Claude, and walked swiftly to the head of the stairs, which he reached just in time to come face to face with the doctor, who was bounding up two steps at a time. The latter caught sight of Marian in the arms of her brother and shouted:

"Down with that woman!"

"Down with you!" Claude shouted back at him, and the doctor having come within arm's length in his impetuous upward rush, Claude caught him fairly on the tip of the nose with a straight left and with such excellent effect that the useful organ which had but a moment before decorated his face at once took on a strong resemblance to a mashed turnip, and the owner of it went over and over down the stairs like an immense pinwheel.

"I'm all right, Morton," said Marian, and her brother set her on her feet and put one arm around her slim waist, and thus supporting her followed Claude down the stairs and past the unconscious form of the doctor and so out of the house in which the girl had gone through such a peculiar and mysterious experience, one that she now recalled with a shudder.

A passing taxi was chartered to convey them home, and it was with a sigh of relief that Claude conducted Marian to her room and bade her rest for a short time on her bed. Then, when she felt that she had fully recovered she told the story of her recent terrible scene with the mysterious violinist.

"I think I understand why he left Marian after reducing her to insensibility by his playing and his threats," said Morton. "Regarding her as safely held by the steel bands, he probably went out to get a friendly hypnotist to operate on her when she came back to life, and now I'm going to get one for Claude."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

AN hour later Morton came back, bringing with him a man of middle age, who glanced keenly at Claude when he was presented to him. Then he at once opened the important subject that had brought him into the house.

"Mr. Clyde has told me that the last time you saw this dagger you were looking at it in your stateroom on board the ship," he said. "Were any of the stones especially brilliant?"

"Yes; the diamond in the center was of such unusual brilliancy that it fairly made my eyes ache and my senses swim."

"Ah!" exclaimed the other, "I begin to get an idea. There is no doubt in my mind that the brilliancy of the diamond induced a condition of auto-hypnotism, and if my surmise is correct the solution of the mystery will be easy. Please look me steadily in the eyes."

Claude did so, and the hypnotist at once began to make long and short passes with his hands before him, and in less than a minute Claude's eyes began to droop, and finally closed. Then the hypnotist shook him roughly and then smiled as though satisfied.

"You are in your stateroom on board the vessel," he said, speaking softly into Claude's ear, "and you are looking at the god's dagger. Now go on and tell me all that you did."

And in a sing-song monotone Claude complied, speaking without interruption for over two minutes, at the end of which the hypnotist again shook him roughly, snapped his fingers before the closed eyes, and shouted:

"Right, right!"

Claude at once opened his eyes and gazed around him in a dazed way until his gaze rested on the smiling face of the hypnotist.

"Mr. Harrison," said the latter, "bring me the silk hat in the leathern box that you brought home from India and I'll surprise you."

Claude arose wonderingly to his feet and left the room, returning a moment later with a hatcase of leather in his grasp, which he at once put down before the hypnotist. The latter removed the cover, took out the opera hat that it contained and proceeded with the aid of a pocket-knife to cut out the silken lining in the top of the hat. Then he plunged his hand inside the hat and brought out the god's dagger and held it up to view.

"There it is!" cried out three voices, and Morton, Marian and Claude gave vent to exclamations of relief.

"It is all very simple, Mr. Harrison," said the hypnotist. "You were under the influence of a hypnotic spell induced by regarding the brilliant diamond in the hilt of the dagger steadily, a common occurrence under similar circumstances. When I had subjected you to my will a few minutes ago and commanded you to narrate all that followed after you began to look at the dagger, you told how you had removed the lining of the opera hat, placed the dagger under it, and had then securely pasted down the lining again, so that no trace of your work could be seen. Under the hypnotic spell it was, of course, impossible for you to recall what you had done when you returned to your proper frame of mind."

"What is your fee?" asked Claude.

He was told, and gladly trebled it in his joy at the recovery of the strangely lost dagger, and then the hypno-

tist left the house and the three sat down to talk the matter over.

"Well, now that you have the dagger again, what are you going to do with the confounded thing?" asked Morton, picking it up and admiringly inspecting the richly jeweled hilt. "I'll admit that it is a very valuable thing, and there is no doubt in my mind that those stones are worth something over a hundred thousand dollars."

"Then what would you advise me to do with an article that represented that amount of money?" asked Claude.

"I am not thinking of its intrinsic value, I am only recalling the fact that your retention of it is opposed by numerous persons who have wealth, brains and mysterious powers that are not to be met by ordinary precautions on your part. That fact means to me that so long as the thing remains in your hands your peace of mind is going to be disturbed, your sleep is going to be broken, and you and Marian are going to be in constant danger at the hands of religious fanatics, who would regard murder under such conditions as something highly praiseworthy."

"That is all very true," admitted Claude, "but when you realize all that I have been through since I filched it from the temple, do you think that I can feel satisfied to give it up?"

"Probably no," returned Morton; "but I am only thinking of the dangers that confront you and Marian so long as you retain possession of it. You, Claude, are gifted with nerves that resemble your magnificent muscles, and you probably can stand the strain and even find some pleasure in continuing to defeat the many schemes concocted to wrest it from you, but what will be the effect on Marian, whose nervous condition, as reported to me by you, brought me up here to see her to-day. Think of her terrible experience within the last few hours, and ask yourself what would have been her fate had you not possessed not only the scientific knowledge to discover the mysterious power that bound her down with bands of steel to that divan but also the scientific apparatus of your own construction to release her. While it is true that the proper kind of files would have eventually freed her, I cannot recall the close clasp of those steel bands around her body and limbs without realizing how impossible it would have been to set her free without inflicting more or less injury to various parts of her body. It would have taken hours of the most careful work to have liberated her with files of Harveyized steel, and I am sure that it could not have been done without injury."

Marian gasped as though short of breath. "I can feel them yet," she said, and shuddered as she recalled the terrible grip of the steel bands.

"Well," slowly said Claude, "I must think it over and make up my mind what course to pursue in the matter."

Morton Clyde regarded the strong frame and determined face of his sister's husband long and earnestly; then he shook his head. "One does not need to be the seventh son of a seventh son, or to have been born with a caul to foretell what your decision will be," he said, and his words were tinged with regret. "With your muscles and nerves and brains it is perfectly natural that you should feel like fighting instead of tamely accepting defeat in this matter, but when you are thinking it over I beg that you will keep Marian constantly in your mind."

"Don't give up on my account, Claude," bravely said his wife. "No woman in New York has such jewels as the hilt of the dagger contains, and as we intend to go into society I am woman enough to desire diamonds and rubies that will make my female friends turn green with envy."

"Provided that you retain sufficient health under the weight of this horrible strain to ever wear them, Marian," warningly said Morton. "You have had ample proof that the persons opposed to you in the matter of the retention of the dagger are brainy and resourceful, and that their methods are mysterious and hard to foresee and difficult to defeat. How many more experiences like that of to-day do you think you could pass through and not break down?"

Marian shivered and was silent, and as this was far more expressive than any words could possibly have been, Morton turned to Claude and again warned him to keep his wife in his mind when deliberating over the matter, and then took his departure, leaving the couple gazing intently on the jeweled weapon that had plunged them into so many dangerous and mysterious adventures since the night when Claude filched it from the Temple of Jain.

It was perfectly natural for a young and beautiful woman like Marian to feel a longing to wear jewelry such as she was certain no woman in New York society could display, and this genuinely feminine sentiment kept her silent when she saw Claude plunged in deep thought and well knew what was the subject of his profound cogitations.

At the end of an hour of hard thinking Claude got upon his feet and turned to his charming wife: "As you said, Marian, we intend to go into society, and it would fill me with joy to see those magnificent jewels blazing on you to the despair of every woman who gazed upon you, but I can't make up my mind what to do at the present, and feel that I must sleep on it."

"Yes, the mind is clearest in the early hours of the morning, and you will be able to decide then," said Marian. That ended the matter for the present, and they went out to amuse themselves and banish unpleasant thoughts from their minds.

Claude was sound asleep in the small hours of the morning when he was very unpleasantly aroused from his slumbers by a succession of anguished sounds that brought him erect in the bed with a start. The electric light, without which his wife had been unable to sleep since the first attempt to recover the god's dagger had upset her nerves, was still burning in the room, and Claude saw that his wife was twisting uneasily at his side and uttering groans that seemed to indicate that she was in terrible suffering.

He gently aroused her from her sleep and held her closely in his arms while he spoke soothingly to her. "Are you in pain, dearest?" he tenderly asked, holding her trembling form close in his powerful arms and raining kisses on her pale face. "Speak to me, darling girl."

Then Marian seemed to realize where she was, and she uttered a sigh of relief and thankfulness and returned his caresses.

"What is it?" asked Claude, and with a shudder that she was apparently not able to repress, Marian answered:

"I felt those steel bands clasping me again and crushing the breath out of my body, and I heard that violinist playing something that seemed to speak to me and tell me that you had been trapped by our enemies and your life made forfeit to the worshipers of Jain. Oh, Claude, it was all so real, and I was sure that you were dead and that I should never behold your dear face in this life again."

"Well, I'll prove to you that I'm very much alive," smilingly said Claude, and he treated her to such an embrace that she hysterically cried out:

"Oh, that was nearly as bad as the steel bands."

However, Claude's caresses quieted her down, and within an hour Marian fell asleep in his arms. He looked down upon the lovely face, and an expression born of a sudden resolution lit up his countenance. He left her sleeping during the morning, bidding the maid inform her mistress that he would return for luncheon, and then he started off down-town. During the course of the morning he visited the office of a foreign express company and also made a call at the office of a cable company.

When he had made these calls he seemed to be in a happy frame of mind and continued on his way, whistling and humming snatches of songs, something he had not done for many weeks.

Then he made his way home in ample time for luncheon, and at once ran up to his wife's boudoir, finding her cool and crisp from the recent hands of her competent maid, and looking so charming that he at once ran across the room and warmly kissed her.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I have done something to assure our happiness. We are young, wealthy and love one another, and by sending the dagger back to India and a cablegram to Sunga Zilef I have made sure that we can bid a long farewell to the gods of Peshawur."

THE DEBUT OF "PITTSBURGH" WILLIAMS

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT

MR. STANLEY RUSSELL, the millionaire proprietor of the New York *Chronicle*, was in his private office one afternoon, busy with some papers, when the boy brought in word that Mr. Williams wished to see him.

"Who is Mr. Williams?" he asked.

"Why, he's a new reporter, sir," said the boy.

"Can't he see the managing editor?" said Mr. Russell.

"No, sir; he says it's something very important, and he's got to see you."

"Very well, let him come in," said the newspaper magnate, thereby establishing an unusual precedent and sending a buzz of comment among the group of reporters lounging outside in the city department.

"I wonder what that kid wants to see the chief about?" said one.

Stepping toward the prisoner, with a quick movement he drew away in two fragments a wax mask.

" 'Pittsburgh' has got his nerve with him," said another. "I suppose he is going to ask the boss to take him off emergency duty and give him a raise from $18 to $20 a week."

There was a general laugh at this sally, for the speakers were all space men, who earned from $40 to $60 a week, and naturally looked down on this young "colt," who had recently emerged from the smoky surroundings of Pittsburgh—the city that gave him his nickname—into the highly charged atmosphere of Park Row.

"I'll lay drinks for the crowd that he comes out of that room within three minutes," said one of the star reporters, looking at his watch.

"I'll go you," said another, and for the next few minutes they sat with eyes fixed on the door of the great man's sanctum, which, contrary to all expectations, remained closed.

"Well, Williams," said Mr. Russell, as he saw before him a tall, young man wearing glasses, "what is it?"

The reporter hesitated a little, and then said:

"I have an idea, sir, for a sensation—something out of the common—a sort of a fake, I suppose, but it might be a big thing."

"What kind of a fake are you thinking of?"

"An execution fake."

"What?"

"It's a scheme, sir, to beat the other newspapers in getting some poor devil executed. One of the Philadelphia papers did it five years ago, when that nigger Johnson was hanged at Harrisburg, and they 'scooped' everybody. Don't you remember it?"

"No," said Mr. Russell, amused at Williams' audacity. "Sit down and tell me about it."

"Why, the day before the hanging was to take place the *Universe* man arranged with the murderer and the sheriff to have the execution come off four hours ahead of the appointed time. Then he wrote up the story and had it on the wire before the other newspapermen had reached the jail. The result was that the *Universe* scored a clean beat on the city."

"But how in the world did he persuade the sheriff and the condemned man to consent to such a change?"

"Very easily. A few drinks and some smooth talk fixed the sheriff, who did not mind advancing the hour, so long as Johnson was willing.

Then the reporter went to Johnson and convinced him that, as he had to die anyhow, it didn't matter much when the hanging took place. The difference of a few hours couldn't harm him any, while it might do a lot of good to his family. The reporter agreed to give Johnson a hundred dollars in cash for his wife and to pay for all that the man could eat and drink before he was executed. Johnson thought it all over and decided that the offer was too good to throw away, so he told them to get ready the rope and bring on their champagne, chicken salad and pie. By the time he came to be hanged he was stuffed so full of all kinds of things that he hardly felt it."

"And you wish me to go in for something of this sort?" asked Mr. Russell.

"No," said Williams; "my idea is an improvement, not an imitation. The scheme I have in mind is quite unique and will make a stunning sensation—that is, if I am able to carry it out—for it will take some money."

"Well, let me hear your idea," said the *Chronicle's* proprietor, whose curiosity was aroused.

"You know, sir, this murderer Munsheimer, is to be electrocuted next week at Ossining. The case was the talk of the country for weeks. It was one of the most brutal murders on record—the mother and little child, you remember, up in Westchester County. Fiend though he is, Munsheimer is a man of brains, and will look favorably, I think, on a plan that will postpone his execution for perhaps a week, and the result in financial advantage to his daughter, who is the only human being he cares anything about. I propose to fake up a brother for Munsheimer and then work the old scheme of an escape by means of a change of clothes, a false beard, etc. That will postpone the execution until such time as we are ready to have it come off, and the *Chronicle* will have an exclusive story."

Mr. Russell frowned. "You would be blocking the wheels of justice, Mr. Williams, and performing a criminal act. Do you suppose I would for one moment consider aiding a murderer to escape from prison?"

"You don't quite get my idea, sir," said Williams, and then, talking very fast and with increasing confidence, he went into an explanation that caused Mr. Russell, when he finally understood it, to purse his lips into a long whistle of astonishment.

"And do you really think such a scheme can be carried through?" he asked.

"I am sure it can, sir, if you will get me the passes to the prison and furnish money to pay this French doctor. You know his charges are pretty high."

"Oh, there will be no trouble about that," said the newspaper autocrat; and then, coming to one of those quick decisions for which he was famous, he added: "You may go ahead on these lines, Williams, and report to me personally from day to day."

An hour later Williams was in the office of Doctor Mazagrin, a queer little Frenchman, who lived on Waverly Place. His specialty was the making of death masks, artificial noses, etc., and it was his boast that he could work such a transformation in any man that not even his own wife would know him. He accomplished this by building upon the client's face false features of wax or plaster, so perfectly concealed by means of a secret preparation—a sort of enamel—that there was no possibility of immediate detection.

"I want you to get up a face for this man that will make him look like some other man," said Williams, producing one of Munsheimer's photographs.

"Vaire ees zee ozaire man?" asked the doctor.

"Any other man will do; pick out the one you want. You and he will have to go up to Ossining together to see your dear relative, who is a murderer. You'll be his uncle, and the man you're going to hire will be his brother—see?"

"Thees ees a vaire peculaire case," remarked the doctor, whereupon Williams produced a large roll of bills, and the Frenchman's hesitation was disposed of forthwith.

The day of the execution came, and in the city of Ossining there was great excitement. Although none save a favored few could witness the final act in the tragedy, the streets about the prison were crowded with people from the surrounding district and even from a distance, who had gathered for the mere satisfaction of seeing the black flag shoot up from the death-chamber when the deadly current was turned on.

The hour came and passed, but no black flag appeared. Presently messengers were seen hurrying from the prison to the telegraph office, and in a few minutes the exciting news spread from group to group that Munsheimer had escaped and another man had been substituted for him. The wires carried this news all over the country, and within a few hours extras were out in many cities, detailing under flaring headlines the most extraordinary conspiracy to evade justice that had been known in years. Enterprising correspondents described minutely how, on the morning of the execution, the condemned man had, through special influence, been allowed to receive a last visit from his brother, and how he had disguised himself in the clothes and false beard of the latter and made his escape a few hours before the fatal moment.

The discovery had been made only when the jailers entered the murderer's cell to prepare him for the chair; then it was seen at once that the man who had been intrusted to their custody was gone and that another man was there in his stead. There was no possible doubt that a change had been made; this was apparent at a glance, and the prisoner himself admitted as much, declaring that he was Munsheimer's brother, that he had worn a false beard on his visits to the prison, that his

brother had put on this beard as well as his clothes and had thus been able to leave the prison without exciting suspicion. It was evident that the escape had been planned and executed with masterly skill.

Wide discussion followed in the newspapers as to the proper disposition to be made of the brother who had thus sacrificed his freedom to save his brother's life. Legal opinions differed as to the precise nature of his crime and as to the charge which should be brought against him. It was clear, however, that he could not be sentenced to more than a few years' imprisonment, and the ends of justice were plainly baffled. It is true the police of New York City declared that they would soon capture the escaped Munsheimer, and made wise announcements of clues that could not fail to deliver him into their hands. It all ended, however, in talk, and after a four or five days' sensation the subject was dropped.

On the sixth day after the escape the warden of the prison received a visit from a young man, who said he had come on urgent business.

"I have a proposition to make to you, sir, that may relieve you of a grave responsibility."

"And what is that, please?" asked the warden.

"I am in a position to give valuable information about the murderer Munsheimer. Before I make any statement, however, I wish to furnish you with proper credentials as to my responsibility, and to exact from you the formal pledge that, whether you agree to my terms or not, the subject of my visit shall remain an absolute secret between us two. In other words, if you refuse to accept my terms I leave this room without interference, and matters remain exactly as they are at present."

After some hesitation and after reading a strong letter of introduction from a man of great influence in New York City—no less a person, in fact, than the chief of police—the warden agreed to the stranger's terms.

"Very well, sir," said the young man. "My mission is to prove to you that the murderer Munsheimer can be captured. In other words, I know where he is."

The warden looked up incredulously and shook his head.

"It is hardly likely, sir, that you know more than the entire police force of New York City."

"Not likely, I admit, but true, nevertheless. I can prove to you that I know where Munsheimer is, and can insure his capture; and I will do this if you will consent to a very simple condition."

"Name your condition."

"It is that after Munsheimer is delivered into your hands the execution take place without loss of time and that no one except myself and the necessary officials be informed of the fact. Of course, I must also insist that absolute secrecy be preserved as to my connection with the case, and that no effort be made to discover my identity or to investigate my motives. You may imagine what you please, but you must know nothing and must remain as silent as the tomb."

After an hour's argument and thought the warden finally consented to the young man's condition. There seemed to be nothing else for him to do.

"I know, sir, that you are a man of honor," said the stranger, "and now that you have pledged me your word I am sure you will keep it."

"I will keep it," said the warden. "Now, tell me where Munsheimer is."

"Before I do that I desire to put a few questions to his brother. I must ask you to have him brought here."

The warden touched an electric bell and instructed the keeper who answered the summons to bring the murderer's brother into his private office. A little later the prisoner stood before them, looking from one to the other with something of uneasiness in his glance, something of dogged defiance.

"Do you know where your brother is?" said the stranger, addressing the prisoner.

The latter remained silent.

"Answer the gentleman," said the warden a bit sharply.

"Yes, I know where he is."

"And do you refuse to tell us where he is?"

"Certainly I do," said the prisoner, smiling contemptuously at the question. The stranger drew himself up to his full height, which was over six feet, and adjusting his glasses, said impressively:

"And yet the fact is, strange as it may seem, that within two minutes of this moment you will be perfectly willing to tell us everything."

The prisoner started in surprise, and the warden looked at the young man as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"I know what I am doing, sir. Have you a penknife with a sharp blade?"

"I have this one," said the warden.

With the utmost deliberation the young man opened the knife, ran his thumb along the edge, and then said quietly:

"Thanks; I think that will do."

Then, stepping toward the prisoner, with a quick movement he made an incision lightly along the bridge of his nose and drew away in two fragments a wax mask that had been adjusted with wonderful art over the man's face.

"There, now look for yourself. Do you recognize Munsheimer, the murderer?"

In speechless amazement the warden beheld the transformation wrought under his very eyes. The man who had entered the room had a prominent nose, with downward curve; the man who stood there now had a flat nose, turned up at the end. The man who came in had a strongly marked chin and jaw, while the one they were now looking at had rather a weak lower face. There was no possibility of doubt—the man before them was Munsheimer himself, the genuine murderer.

"Are you really the murderer Munsheimer?"

asked the warden, so astonished that he forgot to be severe.

"I am, sir," answered the man.

"But your voice is not the same as Munsheimer's; he spoke in gruff tones, while your voice is high-pitched. How is that?"

"Do you see this mark on my neck?" asked the prisoner, plainly delighted with the success of his masquerading. "There are two of them—one on either side—and they mark the point where a hyperdermic injection of some very unpleasant stuff was given me on the morning of my escape. That was a good joke on you, Mr. Warden."

The man pointed to two slight punctures of the skin just beneath the line of his collar and exactly over the vocal cords. Then he continued: "After I received these injections my voice was strangely affected and has remained shrill ever since. The man who gave me the injections said that their effect would last about ten days."

"Who was the man who gave you these injections, and why did he do it?"

"I have no more idea about that than you have. He came with my brother and said he was my uncle, but I will swear I never had an uncle, so he must have been mistaken. Between you and me, I never had a brother, either."

"Why did you let him do this to you?"

"What did I care? I was going to die anyhow within a few hours, and I thought I might as well give somebody a little pleasure before making my exit."

"And did he put on the false nose and false chin you have been wearing?"

"Yes, he was very much interested in altering my physiognomy. I'm sure I don't know why, but it seemed to amuse him, and I had no objections. Besides that, it gave me the satisfaction of making fools of the amiable gentlemen who have kept me locked up behind iron bars."

"Enough of this nonsense, Munsheimer," said the warden sternly. "You have been a party to this attempt to save your life, there is no use denying it. If you refuse to tell us of your own accord who were your accomplices we shall take the proper steps to find out."

"I wish you joy, sir, in the undertaking," said Munsheimer, bowing with mock politeness. "When you discover the name of my self-sacrificing relative I shall be exceedingly obliged if you will inform me who he is."

"Take this man back to his cell," said the warden to the keeper.

When the two men had left the room the warden, turning to the stranger, said, his whole manner having changed:

"I shall keep my pledge to you, sir, although in so doing I am false to my duty to the State. You are in possession of facts that should belong to the police. There has been an extraordinary conspiracy here, the nature of which I cannot understand, but which should certainly be laid bare. My tongue, however, is tied by the promise you have exacted from me. Munsheimer will be electrocuted this afternoon at three o'clock, and no one outside of the prison officials and yourself will be informed of the fact or allowed to be present. Are you satisfied now, and will you not throw some light upon this mystery?"

"That, sir, is impossible. I can assure you, however, as a gentleman, that I am shielding no criminal, nor am I, by my silence, in any way obstructing the course of justice. The murderer is here; he has never left his cell, and his execution will avenge the crimes he committed. As for the delay of a few days, that has harmed no one, and instead of blaming me you should thank me for having put you in possession of facts relieving you of the charge of negligence. Your instructions were to execute this man within the week beginning April the 13th. Instead of executing him on the first day of that week you will have done so on the last day. In that you are acting within the limits of your own discretion, and if any one asks you why you did not deny the sensational reports in this case you have only to say that you did not deem it incumbent upon you to consider seriously the product of reporters' imaginations. They said that your prisoner had escaped and cheated the electric chair; you produce the doctor's certificate that the prisoner was duly executed as prescribed by the law. If any one doubts your statement they have only to come and look at the corpse, which I advise you to keep for a few days and also to have photographed. Now, Mr. Warden, it only remains for me to thank you for your honorable action and to leave you to your duties. I shall remain in the prison until the execution has taken place."

"Very well, sir," said the warden, who did some hard thinking during the next few hours.

The next morning the *Chronicle* came out with a two-page article that startled New York and the whole country as no newspaper article had done for years. It was an exclusive account of the conspiracy to save the murderer Munsheimer, of the way that conspiracy had been baffled, and of the man's final execution. The method by which the murderer had been so wonderfully disguised was explained in detail, opinions being given by experts, who stated that it is possible to prepare the face so cunningly by building up the nose, the chin and the cheekbones with wax additions, and then covering the whole with liquid enamel that such a fraud would not be detected for several days, possibly weeks, not until the enamel had worn off sufficiently to expose the edges of the added parts, or until it had begun to crack. Then followed a statement made by Munsheimer, giving full details of his crime, and making absolute confession of his guilt.

On the night of the day when the *Chronicle* secured this greatest "beat" in its history, Pittsburgh Williams found in his box in the city department an envelope containing a check for $1,000, and the congratulations of Mr. Stanley Russell.

THE SORCERESS

By PAUL DE LOCK.

PART ONE.

I HAD virtually left the force (but had not sent in my formal resignation), when I was visited by a young man of gentlemanly though somewhat dissipated appearance, and looking very pale and agitated, who called to secure my services upon a peculiar and most perplexing case.

A week before, Agnes St. Denis, a beautiul and well-known actress from the theater in Chalons, had mysteriously disappeared from the very threshold of her home, and, despite the utmost endeavors of her friends, no trace of her whereabouts could be discovered. The story of the affair, as related by my visitor, who, during its recital, was much moved, and made no effort to conceal his emotion, presented a phase of Parisian life which, although familiar to me, had never before come under my immediate notice. The salient features of the story were as follows:

"My name is Stuart Gaultier, and I reside in Paris. My occupation is that of traveler for the jewelry house of Reno & Sentin, and my business takes me frequently to Chalons. Six months ago I became acquainted with Agnes St. Denis. She was but a women of the stage; she had many lovers. Her favors were sold to the highest bidder; yet, from the first moment I saw her I loved her as I have never loved woman before. At first she regarded me only as she did all men, but my devotion was so evident, my words so sincere, that gradually a change came over her, and she confessed that she returned my love. It was then that my passion led me to commit what 'the world' would call an act of folly, and I offered marriage to her."

"Which offer was, of course, at once accepted?" I said, dryly.

"Nay, monsieur," said M. Gaultier, quickly, and evidently nettled by the words which I regretted as soon as spoken; "on the contrary, she refused.

" 'I think you are mad, Stuart,' she said, shrugging her round, white shoulders. 'You would ruin your prospects for life. Society would ostracize you, and you would learn to hate and abhor me as the author of your ruin.'

" 'Never!' I responded, passionately. 'I care not what the world may say, Agnes! I care only for you.'

" 'In spite of my past?' she queried.

" 'In spite of everything, Agnes. Oh, my darling, let me rescue you. Let me place you once more in the ranks of respected women. Consent to be my wife!'

"She made no answer for a moment, and I noticed that her beautiful eyes were filling with tears as her head drooped forward upon my shoulder.

" 'Your kindness affects me deeply, Stuart, she murmured at last, 'but I can give you no answer now. Come to me again on the night of Easter. Then you shall have my reply."

"On the morning of Easter Sunday, monsieur, I arrived again at Chalons. I was in a fever of unrest and suspense, and wandered aimlessly about the town until I found myself standing before an old Mission Church in the Rue Heloise. The bells were just pealing forth their silvery summons to worship, and, half unconsciously, I joined the ever-increasing throng of devotees, and entered the sacred edifice. I had not been seated long, when, looking across the aisle, I was startled to behold the kneeling form of Agnes St. Denis; upon her clear-cut features rested an expression that betokened that no thought but of the risen Christ, toward whose image above the lilies on the altar she prayed, occupied her mind. At times tears would start down her beautiful face, and my heart bounded exultantly as I thought of the evening, and her answer to my suit. She looked neither to the right nor to the left; but her face, pale and rapt, was steadfastly turned toward the altar and the chanting priest. After service she lingered a moment, her head bowed in prayer, a look upon her sweet face I had never seen there before. Then rising, with downcast head, she glided towards the door. A moment later I, too, arose and followed.

"As Agnes passed out of the place of worship, I saw a dark-robed figure glide from the shadow of a great pillar at the entrance—a man dressed in the garb of a Benedictine monk. As she passed him he spoke to her in a low, quick, almost fierce tone. She answered shortly, and turning her back on him, passed out into the street. He muttered something, and followed her, his soft, wide-brimmed hat drawn low over his eyes. My curiosity excited to the utmost, I followed, and saw them go down the street and across the bridge. A secluded by-street, leading to the house where Agnes boarded, ran to the south, and here she paused to gather some of the yellow acacia blossoms that bent the slight branches with their delicate weight of beauty. The man approached, and reaching out, broke the tender things from the tree before Agnes seemed aware of his presence, and held them to her with a mixture of beseeching and imperiousness in his manner that apparently

irritated her. She refused the flowers, with a gesture eloquent through displeasure. He spoke, and she replied, when he threw the blossoms on the ground, and put his foot on the pretty yellow things, marring all their fairness. A passionate conversation ensued, and I saw the great eyes of Agnes flash angrily as her excitement increased. Suddenly the man grasped her arm, though she strove to avoid his hand, and saying something with his mouth close to her ear, he turned and walked rapidly down the small side street, till the trees hid him from view. At the same time, and ere I had time to attract her attention, Agnes hastened away, and in a short space of time reached her boarding-house.

"My thoughts in a whirl, utterly unable to comprehend the strange scene I had witnessed, I retraced my steps towards the hotel, where I passed a long and wretched afternoon, waiting impatiently till the shades of night permitted a visit unobserved to the woman I loved so well.

"Early in the evening I made my way toward the house of Madame Lemoine. The waiting-maid met me at the door. In answer to my inquiry as to whether Mlle. St. Denis was in, the girl burst into tears.

"'Alas, M. Gaultier,' she sobbed, 'Mlle. Agnes has disappeared—abducted, I fear.'

"'Abducted!' I echoed, incredulously, staring at her, and just then Madame Lemoine herself swept forward.

"'Agnes has indeed left us, M. Gaultier,' she said, 'but whether voluntarily or not we cannot tell. A few moments after dusk a carriage rolled up to the door, and a stylish-looking gentleman, alighting, rang the bell and inquired for Mlle. St. Denis. He was invited in, but refused, saying he had but a brief message for her. Agnes was at once summoned, and, coming down-stairs, she stepped out upon the veranda, and closed the door after her. We then heard the confused hum of voices (two, I am positive, were men's voices, although I saw but one gentleman alight from the carriage), but could not distinguish the words. In a few moments the voices ceased, and an instant later we heard the carriage roll away. I waited for Agnes to enter, but she did not make her appearance, and going to the door I found she had vanished. We searched the entire grounds, but could find no trace of her. Heaven alone knows what mystery is in the affair, but I hope it will not injure my house.'

"For a space, M. Chassac, I stood fairly stunned by what I had heard, and then like a madman I rushed from the house to the police-station, and had the local force put at once upon the case. For a week, night and day, we have sought for some trace of the missing girl, but without success. As a last hope I have called to enlist your sympathy and services in the affair, and rest assured, M. Chassac, no meager reward shall be yours if you succeed. Here is a photograph of Agnes. It is a perfect picture, and upon the back I have written a short description which will materially aid you in the search."

Taking the photo, I looked upon one of the most beautiful faces I have ever had the fortune to behold. If the original was one-half as lovely I could not wonder at the young man's devotion.

"A wondrously perfect face, M. Gaultier," I said, laying the picture down. "The face and the story both interest me, and I will undertake to solve the mystery of Mlle. St. Denis' strange disappearance. Now answer me a few questions, please. Had you any rivals in the affections of Mlle. St. Denis—I mean any jealous of your attentions to her?"

"None to my knowledge, monsieur."

"Did Madame Lemoine know that you had offered marriage to the young lady?"

"She did not."

"Was the gentleman who called for Mlle. St. Denis a regular visitor at the house of Madame Lemoine?"

"She swears she never saw him before."

"Have you formed any theory whatever as to the abduction of Mlle. St. Denis?"

"Yes, M. Chassac, I have," said Gaultier, emphatically.

"I believe that the man looking like a monk who addressed her in the morning could tell of her whereabouts, if he chose. I believe that she is at this moment concealed in the monastery, a few miles from Chalons. I——"

"Did you recognize this man?"

"I could not swear as to his identity, from the fact that his face was partly concealed by the wide-brimmed hat he wore, but he bore some resemblance to a monk known as Father Ignatius."

"Have you mentioned your suspicions to any one else, M. Gaultier?"

"Yes, to the local authorities at Chalons; but they laughed at me, and refused to make any search whatever of the building."

"They could make no such search, Mr. Gaultier," I said, "without special permission from the lieutenant-general of police. Church and state, at present, are at loggerheads, and 'tis especially dangerous to meddle in the affairs of churchmen on bare suspicions. But allowing that the monk had a hand in the abduction of Mlle. St. Denis, it is unlikely that he would confine her in the monastery where his brethren would surely be cognizant of all that took place about them."

"It seems so, monsieur, yet something tells me that it is there we shall find her," said Gaultier, earnestly. "He may not be a real monk."

"Well, M. Gaultier," I returned, "I will consider the matter in all its bearings. Call upon me again to-morrow morning."

Expressing his thanks, M. Gaultier hurried away, and ensconcing myself in an easy-chair I gave myself up to reflection. The mysterious disappearance of Mlle. St. Denis was certainly a peculiar affair, yet capable of a hundred different solutions. The absence of any apparent motive

for either voluntary absence or abduction seemed, at first thought, an insurmountable bar to the correct solution of the case; yet often before had a young and pretty girl absented herself from home and kindred for nothing else but the notoriety she would necessarily gain from the hue and cry that would surely be raised over her disappearance; and then, after a few weeks of tantalizing uncertainty, in many instances fatal grief of her friends, turn up again safe and sound, with no excuse or apology to offer for her mad freak. This theory might be applied to the case of Mlle. St. Denis, if no special motive for voluntary absence could be proven; but to me, although it had not occurred to M. Gaultier, there seemed to be a strong motive for the voluntary flight of Agnes St. Denis—and that motive would be the offer of marriage with which M. Gaultier had favored her a few weeks previous. If neither of these theories were correct, then we should have to entertain the theory of abduction. But accepting the theory of abduction, we would then have to search for the motive which inspired the crime, whether love, hatred or revenge. Again, two strangers had held conversation with Mlle. St. Denis the day she disappeared—the monk and a "stylish-dressed" gentleman. The former, according to M. Gaultier's testimony, had exhibited anger while speaking with her—the latter had only a simple "message" to deliver to her. To no one's knowledge had Mlle. St. Denis met either of these men before.

I was fairly puzzled as these thoughts revolved slowly through my mind, and was beginning to think that the task I had undertaken was a trifle too arduous for my declining years, when a new light was thrown upon the mysterious affair—and by no less a personage than Mlle. St. Denis herself.

As already recorded, I had instructed M. Gaultier to visit me on the following morning, but I had the pleasure of again seeing him many hours before the appointed time.

Scarcely three hours had elapsed from the time he had taken leave of me, when, breathless and excited, his cheeks flushed, a new light in his eyes, he burst again into my presence.

"My suspicions were correct, M. Chassac!" he cried exultantly. "Read this note"—putting a crumpled piece of paper in my hand. "I found it near the basement steps of my lodgings. I would have passed it by unheeded, but something in the peculiarity of its folding attracted my attention, and, dieu merci, I picked it up. How it came there heaven only knows."

There were only a few words in the note, and they, written in a delicate, unsteady hand, were as follows:

"I am trapped in the Benedictine Monastery, on the road leading from Chalons to Paris. A horrible fate awaits me, unless I am speedily rescued. In the name of the Virgin save me, whoever reads this. My cell is on the third floor, in the west corner. AGNES ST. DENIS.

"A peculiar case, truly," I observed, thoughtfully, as I laid the paper down. "Have you no idea whence came the note?"

"Not the slightest," answered M. Gaultier. "But, M. Chassac," imploringly, "you will go to work at once upon the case, will you not?"

"I start for Chalons within the hour," I said, quietly.

"Heaven bless you, M. Chassac, I will accompany you, and——"

"Nay, monsieur," I interrupted, "for I have other work for you to do. Be patient a moment, while I write a few lines, and then you shall have your instructions."

"Now, M. Gaultier," I resumed, my task completed, "as I informed you a few hours ago, it is a serious matter to meddle with affairs of churchmen without almost positive proof of evil doing—especially without express sanction of Government. For the present I shall resort to stratagem to effect the release of Mlle. St. Denis, leaving you here to crave audience of the lieutenant-general on his arrival, and obtain official permission to resort to whatever means we may deem necessary to accomplish our object. Deliver this letter to him at the first opportunity; in it I have stated the matter fully. He will place at your service a certain number of trusty men. With them push immediately for Chalons. That is all!"

"May the saints attend you, M. Chassac," said the young man, fervently, grasping my hand, and then hurried from the apartment.

Making a few changes in my attire, I sought the lodgings of my old comrade, Claude Javert, and, after briefly narrating the case, obtained his consent to bear me company. A half-hour later, disguised in the humble garb of the artisan, we were on our way to Chalons, and, an hour after our arrival, found ourselves before the frowning walls of the monastery.

We had engaged horses at Chalons—two of the sorriest-looking steeds that mortal eyes ever rested on—to carry us to this gloomy pile, which, isolated and alone, was situate about seven miles from the town, on the road leading to Paris. During our journey we had fully matured our plans.

Alighting, we approached the massive portals and pulled the bell. Fully five minutes elapsed before the summons was answered, and then a faint light gleamed from one of the windows, shuffling footsteps fell upon our ears, the door opened, and a portly, not unkindly looking man of middle age, clad in the habit of his order, stood before us. He nodded slightly, flashing the light from the lamp he carried full upon us, and, glancing sharply from one to the other, waited for us to state our business.

"We crave pardon, holy father," I began humbly, "for this intrusion; but the lateness of the hour has compelled us to pause on our journey and, seeing no other house about here, to ask permission to tarry with you overnight. Moreover, our horses are utterly fatigued, and we our-

selves sorely wearied from many hours in the saddle."

"Where are you from, and what is your destination?" he queried.

"From Charlemont, journeying towards Paris," I answered promptly.

"You may enter," he said, after a moment's reflection, "for in good truth you look sorely in need of rest. By some contrivance we can, doubtless, find room for your horses also. Come"; and, turning, he led us through the bare, uncarpeted hall, up a narrow flight of stairs, to our apartment for the night—a diminutive room, high ceilinged, with bare, white walls. The only articles of furniture therein was a narrow bed, built solidly into the wall, and a small table and low chair.

"Will you have anything to eat?" queried our guide (whom we learned afterwards was the prior himself), as he turned to leave the room. "If so——"

"Nay, holy father," I interrupted; "we must not trespass on your kindness further. We supped heartily at Chalons."

"Then peaceful rest to ye," he said graciously. "Here is the key of the door—perchance you may wish to fasten it; albeit," smiling, "thieves and rogues have little to do with a house of our order."

With a parting wave of the hand, which might have been intended for benison, he moved away, and we were alone.

"Well, mon ami," said my comrade, throwing himself at full length upon the bed, "we have scored one point at least—we are in the lion's den. What have you next upon the programme?"

"Nothing that can be accomplished to-night," I answered. "I should like to make a quiet tour of inspection of this old rookery, but were we caught prowling about, we might be taken for some of the crooked gentry referred to by our good host. By the way, Claude, what think you of his countenance?"

"A frank and open countenance, in which lurks no trace of cunning or deceit. He, at least, is guiltless of participation in the abduction of Mlle. St. Denis.

"Perhaps," I answered musingly; "but seldom do the faces of these churchmen betray passions."

"Do you think M. Gaultier will be here by morning?" said Javert, with a yawn.

"Undoubtedly."

"If he does not?"

"Then, on some pretext, we must tarry here till his arrival. Without a permit, I am determined to do nothing in the matter. But let us to bed, for the short ride from Chalons astride that wretched beast has well-nigh crippled me."

"As you will, mon ami. I am not in the best possible condition myself."

I was in dreamland almost before my head touched the pillow; but, from long training, I slept lightly, and sprang up alertly an hour or so later at the touch of a hand upon my shoulder. My comrade was standing by the bedside, one hand upraised in a gesture enjoining silence. The light was turned down, but it was not so dark but that traces of strong emotion were visible on his face.

"Come here, Pierre," he whispered, pointing to the latticed window, "and look out and listen."

I obeyed at once.

On one side of the spacious garden, at right angles to a massive tower, rose a heavy pile of building, looking weird and somber in the faint moonlight. There was no sign of life or habitation in this building save a faint gleam of dusky red light just clearing the level of the soil, evidently slanting upward from some underground apartment.

As we listened, there came through the stillness a smothered murmur of voices, and then a sound —too piteously significant to be mistaken—the moan of a woman in extremity of terror or pain.

(*Concluded next week*)

OLDEST CITY IN THE WORLD.

MOUNT ARARAT in Armenia is now generally believed to have been the spot where Noah left the ark. Not until 1829 did a mountain-climber succeed in scaling its steep ascent. Doctor Parrot, an Englishman, achieved that distinction. For centuries the mountain had defied the efforts of mountain-climbers, and the Christian ecclesiastics of Armenia asserted, as an article of faith, that Jehovah had made the peak His earthly home, and that no human could possibly reach the top and escape divine vengeance. When Doctor Parrot declared that he had accomplished the ascent, the priests refused to believe him, and they cling to this attitude of skepticism in spite of the fact that dozens of explorers have since stood on the top of Greater Ararat and gazed out over Armenia from an altitude of 17,000 feet.

Nakhitchevan, or Nakhikhevan, Armenia, on the slopes of Ararat's greater peak, claims to be the oldest town in the world. The name of the rude village means "He descended here," and the townspeople allege that on that very spot Noah disembarked with his family and animals and set up housekeeping, "planted the vine," and made wine and celebrated.

The tomb of Noah's better half is at the base of the mountain, and a fragment of what is said to have been the "true ark" is preserved in an Armenian monastery. Noah was not buried in "the world's oldest city," but near Damascus. He was a very large man, the natives will tell you, and as proof point to his supposed grave, which is almost fifty feet in length. The Armenians also locate the Garden of Eden near Ararat.

THE MAN INSIDE

BY WILL HANSON ROYCE

A MORE dreary, desolate spot was hard to find than the little rough weather-beaten station at Cactus Creek, standing there all alone, with its two shining rails stretching wearily out across the burning Arizona sand, and finally disappearing in the hazy white distance beyond. The entire population of Cactus Creek consisted of a few miners, cowboys and myself, who acted as agent and telegraph operator for the P. S. road, which ran along the course of the almost continually dry river-bed, entirely ignoring the existence of the little mining town back there a quarter of a mile among the foothills.

I was not the first operator who had been installed at Cactus Creek during the past few months, for of the three who had been sent there within that time, one had been shot for cheating at cards, another had thrown up the job in despair and disgust, while my predecessor had been fatally shot for not passing over the company's cash-box quite quick enough to satisfy some parties unknown.

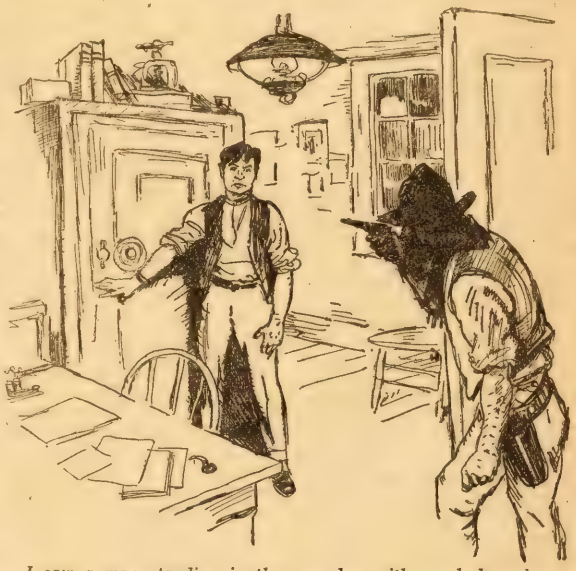
The P. S. road owned and operated the "Lucky Strike" shaft, the principal mine in the vicinity, and had in its employ several hundred regular miners, to say nothing about the gamblers, cowboys and greasers, who hovered instinctively about the neighborhood.

I had been there nearly a month—just about long enough to become well accustomed to the dull monotony and dreary routine of the place.

The little station stood by itself down the track, while the nearest building in sight was the office and engine house of the "Lucky Strike" shaft, a quarter of a mile away. I was the only operator at Cactus Creek, and as an important line of wire ran through the place, I was obliged to be constantly at the station both day and night, having my meals prepared and brought to me from the town by a little yellow-faced Chinaman.

The express was due at Cactus Creek in about half an hour, and I sat there in my stuffy little box of an office reading the weekly paper, which had been sent down to me from the mine office the day before.

The awful heat had gone out of the hot August afternoon, and I had thrown open the one little window of my office to let in the growing coolness of the coming night. Not a sound broke the almost oppressive stillness save the incessant clicking of the telegraph instrument in the corner, and as I sat there half interested in the news of the previous week, I unconsciously fell into a slight doze.



I saw a man standing in the open door with a cocked revolver

How long I slept I could not tell, but it was not long, however, for I was aroused by the familiar call of my office from over the wire, and in a moment I was wide awake, and stepping over to the ticker I quickly responded, and in another moment a message flashed along the line directed to me as follows:

"HEADQUARTERS OFFICE:
"Express envelope on 9:55 express for 'Lucky Strike' mine."

That was all, except for the signature of the operator at the main office, and as I read it through a second time I understood what it meant—that the envelope probably contained the regular monthly pay-roll for the help at the mine,

and that I was to deliver it to the superintendent. I glanced out of the little window up toward the shaft of the Lucky Strike, but there was no light in the office nor any signs of life anywhere to be seen there, and I knew that the office was closed for the day some time before, and that the superintendent was gone. I could not leave the station to hunt him up, and I saw no other way out of it but for me to hold the envelope when it came and deliver it the next day when the office opened. I glanced at my watch and saw that it was nearly ten o'clock and that the express was already due, and I had barely time to make out and sign a receipt before I heard the whistle and the faint increasing roar of the train as it rapidly approached the station. I sprang out onto the platform and waited.

The moon was well up over the foothills to the east in a hazy mist of heat and I could hear above the roar of the distant express the drowsy droning of the locust in the tall, thin prairie grass on the other side of the track. There was usually a group of miners and cowboys from the town at train-time, but to-night I noticed only two lounging figures as they stood leaning up against the side of the station conversing in an undertone. One of them was a miner, I could tell by his smutty flannel shirt, while his companion, the smaller man, I took to be a cowboy or a greaser, by the wide sombrero he wore.

The express began to slacken as it drew rapidly nearer, and then I saw the door of the express coach slide quickly open, and a man lean out and wave a long, narrow envelope. I had just time enough to seize the envelope and give the prepared receipt before the train began to increase its speed again, and in a moment later it was gone, leaving me standing there on the platform alone with the express envelope in my hand.

As I turned to go back into the station again, I saw that the two loungers I had noticed when I came out had disappeared, and thinking they had no doubt gone back up to the village again, I thought no more about it, but went in and sat down and notified the main office that I had received the express envelope all right, and asked for instructions regarding its delivery. The order came to hold the envelope and deliver it to the superintendent as soon as the office was opened in the morning. This was as I expected, but where would I put the envelope for safe-keeping until I could deliver it was a question that began to trouble me not a little, for I knew the risk I ran with it in my possession in this community, and remembering the fate of my predecessor, I began to grow nervous and uneasy. I surveyed the limited space of my little ten-by-twelve office. In one corner stood the telegraph instrument, while in another stood the big old-fashioned iron safe. The safe, I knew, was the proper place to put it, but as I never had used it, I did not know the combination, so that I could not get the envelope out after I had placed it in there, and besides I knew that would be the first place to be searched in case of an attempted robbery.

Behind the stove in the opposite corner, the big office cat—my sole companion in my solitude—sat fast asleep on a pile of old papers. A sudden idea occurred to me, and quickly crossing the room I knelt down and slipped the envelope in between the papers and returned to my seat by the open window scarcely disturbing the cat, who only opened his eyes a little and stretched lazily and then went to sleep again. I picked up the paper once more and tried to read, but in vain; I could not get interested. I could not keep my thoughts from returning to the express envelope in spite of myself.

I lit my pipe and tried to think of something else, but it was useless, for the envelope remained fixed in my thoughts. I sat there for more than an hour, and as everything seemed so peaceful and still outside, my nervous fear began to somewhat abate, and before I knew it I was fast asleep again. I was aroused by the office cat springing up into my lap and purring loudly. I looked at my watch, and was surprised to find that I had slept for over an hour, and that the midnight freight would be due in a few moments. I sat up and rubbed my eyes, and then looked about me. Suddenly I saw, with a start of surprise, that the door of the safe was slightly ajar. This surprised me somewhat, for I had always kept it closed, but not locked, for I did not know the combination; and as I sat there, alone and confused, I caught the gleam of something bright inside the huge interior of the safe, and then it flashed upon me that while I had been asleep some one had stolen in and secreted himself in the big safe with the intention of robbing me after the freight had gone. What was I to do? What could I do unarmed as I was and alone at midnight with a desperate character bent on securing the express envelope at any cost. I was confident, however, that the man in the safe did not know that I was aware of his presence, and I knew that my only chance to save the envelope was by my keeping perfectly cool and collected, for if I alarmed the man inside by my nervous fear he would not hesitate to shoot and relieve me of my trust at his convenience. I picked up my pipe again, and lit it as calmly as if I had been at home, although I confess my heart was beating wildly with terror; yet I noticed that my hand was as steady as usual, while I was entertaining a hundred fitting thoughts as to how to save both the express envelope and my own neck at the same time, and I assure you that it was the most difficult problem I ever tried to solve.

Suddenly an idea struck me, and without a moment's consideration I at once proceeded to put it into execution. It was a single desperate chance, but rather than yield up my trust I resolved to run the risk anyway. If I could in some way keep the man in the safe from show-

ing his hand until the freight came I might succeed. In ten minutes the freight would be here, and I knew they would stop to couple onto the two empty freight-cars standing on the siding at the end of the long plank walk outside. Could I do it? With a grim determination of making a big bluff, at least, I rose to my feet and began pacing up and down the narrow limits of the office, each turn I took bringing me nearer the safe. Slowly to and fro I walked with never so much as a glance in the direction of the safe, although I felt sure that the man inside was watching me with intensity, ready to shoot the moment I betrayed myself. Several times I passed the open door of the safe near enough to touch it, then as I heard a faint whistle far away in the distance I summoned all my courage and strength for the final move, and then I turned just after I passed the safe and threw my whole weight against the door, and it was with a sigh of relief that I heard the ponderous door swing to and the catches slip into position, for I felt then that I had both the envelope and the man safe.

A string of wild, Mexican oaths and curses, mingled with threats in broken English, came in muffled tones from the interior of the safe:

"Caramba! Let me out," cried the caged desperado viciously.

I only laughed nervously as I bent down, and placing my lips close to the side of the door I answered:

"Oh, I couldn't think of it. Wait until the freight comes. She'll be here in just about five minutes now. Can you wait?" I asked mockingly.

"I'll smother in this confounded hole. Let me out," demanded the man inside.

"Oh, don't get excited," I replied loudly, so that he could hear me. "I guess you can stand it. I couldn't think of letting you out just now."

"But I can," said a strange voice, and, turning quickly around, I saw a man standing in the open door with a cocked revolver leveled straight at my head. I recognized the man in a moment —it was the same big miner in the dirty flannel shirt I had noticed as I went out to receive the express envelope—and I had no doubt now but what the man in the safe was his companion with the wide sombrero I had also noticed.

Here was something I had not calculated upon —a desperate man pointing a wicked-looking gun at me with a nasty look in his eye.

"Open that safe and let my pard out," the stranger with the gun demanded sternly.

His unexpected appearance caused me to hesitate a moment in surprise, and then I ventured to speak, for I realized that my last hope was gone, and the only thing left for me to do now was to either obey his command as graciously as possible, or run the risk of getting served as my predecessor had. I could hear the far-away roar of the heavy freight as it slowly—oh, so slowly—crept nearer and nearer each moment.

"Come," cried the burly miner, stepping toward me threateningly.

"Open that door mighty sudden now. Step lively."

I stood there in front of the safe half-paralyzed with fear—my right hand resting on the combination knob. Meanwhile, the man inside had ceased his threats to me and was calling to his comrade to liberate him.

"What if I refuse?" I asked suddenly, for I determined to gain as much time as I could.

The man looked at me a moment in surprise before he answered:

"Then I'll shoot to kill. I'll take no chances this time, you bet, young fellow. So open the door and give me that envelope, and we'll light out before the freight gets along."

Still I hesitated, and I saw that the man was beginning to grow impatient at my delay, and I have since often wondered why he did not shoot me on the spot for my stubbornness.

"Come, now; I'll give you just one minute to open that door, and then, curse you, I'll shoot."

"All right," I answered, calmly, as I determined to try and work a bluff on the man. "Shoot if you want to, but the moment you do your pard is doomed. The combination of the safe is set now, and I am the only one outside of the main office who can open the door, and then your partner will suffocate before you can get him out. Shoot if you want to and run the risk."

For a moment the man stood glaring at me savagely.

"Give me the envelope, then, and I'll skip; refuse, and you are a dead man."

"It's in the safe," I replied, resolved to make as big a bluff as I could make him believe, and the bluff worked to a charm, for a look of baffled rage flew across his face.

"Open the safe, then, and get it out," he demanded, with an oath.

"I won't do it!" I cried, for a sense of security came over me as I heard the freight coming, already beginning to slacken up its speed as it approached. I knew that I might possibly save the express envelope now, yet I realized that my own chances were mighty slim just then.

"Blame you!" cried the outwitted miner, savagely, "take that for your cussedness!" and again, quickly raising his revolver, he fired, and then he turned and sprang out of the open window and disappeared just as the freight came to a standstill in front of the station. I saw red, and fell blindly.

When I opened my eyes again I was lying on the floor surrounded by a group of rough railroad men. The bullet from the stranger's pistol had just grazed the side of my head, dazing me for a few moments, and as soon as I could collect my scattered senses I quickly told them of the man in the safe. Then I crawled over on my hands and knees and tried to open it. After several attempts I succeeded, and the ponderous

door swung slowly agape, and there, crouched inside, was the greaser cowboy in a limp, almost lifeless heap, with a huge revolver still clutched firmly in his frenzied grasp. At first we all concluded he was past recovery, but after we had worked over him a few moments, he slowly opened his eyes in a bewildered manner and looked about him in surprise; and then, pale and trembling, he was put aboard the delayed freight, and after coupling onto the two empty freight-cars, they proceeded with their prisoner to Tucson, leaving a man behind to stay until morning with me. The next morning I left the station in charge of the "brakey" and went over to the office of the Lucky Strike to deliver the express envelope to the superintendent. The superintendent was greatly surprised when I delivered the envelope and related my experience, and I was still greater surprised when he told me that the men had already been paid off the day before in cash brought by a special messenger from headquarters. He took the envelope, however, and proceeded to open it in my presence, and then we were both surprised to find that the troublesome express envelope contained nothing but several sheets of brown wrapping-paper.

I returned to the station with my head full of wonder and astonishment, for I could not understand or comprehend the situation to save my life, and for several days I existed in a maze of perplexity and bewilderment.

At the end of the month I was summoned to the main office of the road, and offered the vacant position of assistant chief operator at headquarters, which I quickly accepted, and it was then I learned that the express envelope was simply a ruse to test my fidelity and pluck, and that the men on the platform, seeing me receive the envelope, took it for the regular pay envelope for the help at the mine, and one of them had slipped in and hid in the big safe, with the intention of relieving me of the envelope at his leisure as soon as the freight had gone, while his companion kept watch outside.

The man we took out of the safe was delivered to the authorities at Tucson City, and served his time, and then went back to Mexico again, a wiser man, I trust, than when he tried to rob the pay envelope at Cactus Creek. The other man, the big miner, was never seen after he left me so abruptly.

The chief operator leaned back in his easy office-chair as he finished his story, and, lighting his cigar, added thoughtfully:

"And that was twenty years ago."

TWO MYSTERIES

THE record of Victor E. Innes, noted criminal, now serving a term in the Georgia state penitentiary and believed by detectives to have murdered the beautiful Nelms sisters of Atlanta, is being investigated to determine whether he is Rome's "swindler preacher."

According to James Andrews and John Lane, two reputable Floyd county citizens, who have seen Innes recently, he is the man who, as pastor of the Maple street Baptist church, was known as the Rev. Henry Wilmer, and who swindled the church while here.

The story of Innes is known the country over. He was accused of murdering the two Atlanta women, who had disappeared, and whose whereabouts, if still living, as Innes claims, has never been learned, in spite of a nation-wide search for them. Acquitted of the charge of murder, Innes was convicted of larceny, it having been proven that he swindled one of the Nelms girls out of large sums of money, for which crime he is now serving time. A woman known as Mrs. Innes was implicated with him in all his crimes.

While here the Rev. Henry Wilmer won the complete confidence of his congregation. He finally offered to travel and give a series of lectures for the benefit of the church. The church advanced him $160 for expenses. He delivered no lectures, but he kept this money and other moneys which he borrowed on previous pretexts.

He was finally charged with swindling, was captured near Chattanooga, Tenn., where he was holding a revival at the time, and was convicted here before Judge Morris. He was sentenced to serve a term in prison, but gave a supersedeas bond and appealed to the Supreme Court. His conviction was upheld by the Supreme Court, but he was never apprehended.

Letters now in the possession of Justice Broach, who was deputy sheriff in 1908, when Wilmer was preaching here, showed that he played the same game at several points in Alabama and in Oklahoma before he came here. He was finally heard from at Portland, Ore., and it was there that Innes was arrested for his alleged connection with the disappearance of the Nelms girls.

Wilmer had two women with him all the time. One he said was his sister and the other his wife. It developed, however, that they were interchangeable in their relations with Wilmer, even if they were related to him at all. At some places he passed the "sister" off as his wife, and at others the "wife" became sister.

The same two women were with Innes when he was arrested in Oregon, and one of them was the mysterious woman who was the sensational feature of the Innes trial in Atlanta.

THE CROYDEN CASE

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER IV.

A DUEL WITH SWORDS.

"WILLIAM, I am sorry that this unpleasant affair has happened between you and Clarence. Surely this never would have occurred if you had not said something to provoke the dear boy," said Lady Anne, the minute William entered the parlor.

"Lady Anne, it would be of no use for me to tell you that your son was in the wrong, and that he provoked the assault—in fact, he first assaulted me—for you would not believe me," William answered, in a haughty manner.

"Mr. Hoffman has just told me all about it, and says that Clarence is to blame. I must see the darling boy, and get him to tell me all about it. I can't think that he is wrong. You are all the time doing something to annoy him."

Lady Anne said this in such a manner that one who was listening to the conversation at the time would have supposed that Clarence and herself were terribly misused by William, whereas his conduct toward his step-mother up to this time was always deferential.

"This is disgusting," murmured Rupel. "She is so wrapped up in her son that she thinks him an angel, and not capable of doing any wrong."

William then took a seat on the sofa, and for some time remained silent. Lady Anne looked at her step-son in an indifferent manner, and fanned herself with a handsome silk fan as she rocked back and forth in a rocking-chair. She did not seem to be much affected by her husband's death, and perhaps if the whole truth were known, she was glad that he was out of the way.

"Lady Anne," William said, after he had finished thinking, "something will have to be done with Clarence. He is doing things every day that will disgrace us if he is allowed to go on. He will have to reform or I shall send him away."

"Pray tell me what right you have to send him away?" asked her ladyship, in a sarcastic manner.

"The right as owner of Croyden Abbey."

"Indeed! How do you know that you have that right? Your father's will has not been found."

"I am Sir Robert Rupel's eldest son, and as regards the will, there are no doubts but what it will be found."

At this moment a servant entered the room and handed William a note. He looked at the address and recognized the handwriting as that of his step-brother. He broke the seal hurriedly, and when he had finished reading the letter he turned to Mr. Hoffman and said:

"Frank, will you come with me to my room? I want to speak to you about some business of importance."

"I will be with you in a few minutes," answered the curate; "you go on ahead; I want to say a few words to her ladyship."

William left the room, and when he had gone the curate said to Lady Anne.

"Your ladyship ought to try and persuade Clarence to give up his evil ways."

"Mr. Hoffman, it is no use for you to try and convince me that my son has done anything wrong, for I will not listen to it."

"Your ladyship knows best," replied the curate, "but if you don't take good advice about this matter and listen to reason you will regret it."

"I'll regret nothing."

"It is no use then for me to say anything further. I will go now and see what Will wants."

"Yes, go and concoct some plan to injure my son."

"Lady Anne, you wrong both Will and myself; neither one of us wishes Clarence any harm," the curate answered, as he left the parlor and then went straight to his friend's room.

When the curate entered Rupel's apartment, he found his friend walking up and down the floor and laboring under a great deal of excitement.

"What's the matter, Will?" Mr. Hoffman asked, as soon as he had taken a seat.

"Read this and you will find out," answered William, as he handed the curate the letter that he had received while in the parlor.

Mr. Hoffman took the note and read the contents. When he had finished reading his face became serious, and he said:

"Clarence must have written this note without thinking. I will go and see him and get him to withdraw this challenge, as you cannot accept it."

"Frank, I hardly know what to do. He says I must fight with him, and if I don't he will try to kill me in another way, and brand me as a coward."

"I will get him to withdraw it," said the curate, as he folded the note up and placed it in his pocket.

"If he should not consent to withdraw it—what then?"

The curate thought for a long time, and it seemed as if he were weighing in his mind all sides of the question. He then looked up and said, in a solemn and decided manner:

"Well, if Clarence does not consent to withdraw this foolish challenge you must accept and fight. Although I am a minister, and ought not to approve of duels, still I will put by my profession for the time and act as your second."

"Frank, how can I ever repay you for this kindness? May God bless you for this!" exclaimed William, with a tremor in his voice, and tears started to his eyes as he clasped his friend's hand and shook it warmly. "I will do anything in the world for Clarence if he will only act rightly. Go see him, and try and persuade him that I wish him no harm."

"I'll go now, and I hope when I return that I will have good news for you."

"Thank you!"

"So be it," the curate replied, as he put on his hat and coat and left the room, intending to go direct to the village inn and see Clarence, who was waiting at the Rupel Arms for an answer.

Clarence had not stayed long at the cottage, but went to the Rupel Arms—a quiet inn at the outskirts of the village—where he wrote the note to his step-brother, and despatched it by a young man—the son of a farmer—whom he had let into his secret, and asked to act as his second.

The curate met the young man in the hall, and the two then went to the Rupel Arms, where they found Clarence sitting at a table, bathing his eye with ice, and slowly sipping a glass of brandy-and-water. When they entered the room Clarence looked up, and when he recognized the curate a scowl came over his face, and he muttered, with an oath:

"What can that Hoffman want? I suppose he has come to preach and pray with me, and to ask me to apologize to that cur. I'll not do it for any one. William has got to fight me. Well, what do you want?"

This last sentence was said aloud as Mr. Hoffman came up to the table.

"Clarence, I have come to get you to withdraw this challence," said the curate, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Look here, Hoffman, I want to tell you one thing right here, and that is, I want none of your meddling. Understand that and get out. William Rupel has got to fight me."

This was said in a savage manner, and Clarence's face assumed a look of hatred and revenge.

"Since you will it so, William will fight you, and I will act as his second," quietly rejoined the curate.

"You—you act as William's second! Ain't you afraid that your bishop will come down on you heavily when he hears of you taking part in a duel?"

"I'm willing to suffer the consequences. I never desert a friend when he has need of my counsel and support."

"All right, Mr. Parson; go back to the abbey and give my compliments to your principal, and tell him to choose his weapons and place of meeting."

"Remember, if anything serious comes of this, that I gave you good advice which you would not listen to."

Mr. Hoffman returned to the abbey and informed William of all that had taken place at the Rupel Arms. When he had finished speaking William became calmer and said:

"Inform Clarence that I choose swords as my weapon, and that the time and place of meeting shall be to-night at midnight, by the side of the lake. It will be moonlight, and we can see as well as by daylight."

The curate left the room and went to make preparations for the coming duel, while William Rupel sat down at his desk and commenced to arrange his affairs. The rest of the afternoon and all that evening William wrote until Mr. Hoffman arrived, and it was not until half-past eleven that he finished the last page of the document that he had been writing. When this was done he folded it, placed it in a sealed envelope and handing it to his friend, said:

"Frank, keep this, and if I die, open it and read what I have written. Now, if you are ready, we will start. Have you got the swords? Did you procure a surgeon?"

Being assured that everything had been attended to, the two friends left the abbey and went direct to the place of meeting. They did not have long to wait, for a few minutes after they reached the spot Clarence and his second were seen coming from the direction of the village. They were accompanied by a third party who proved to be the surgeon. The moon was shining brightly, and as it cast its rays upon the white snow it sparkled like so much silver. It was a beautiful night, and not a sound was heard to break the stillness except the rustling of the stripped limbs of the trees as they swayed back and forth in the breeze.

The swords were taken from their cases and tried by the seconds. Both of the men then took off their coats and stripped to their shirts.

Word was given to commence, and the two swords clashed together, making the woods ring with their noise. Not a word was spoken by either of the men, and they went at their work in dear earnest. William's face was pale and haggard, while Clarence's was flushed and black with hatred. Blow after blow was given, exchanged and parried without any effect. Both men were excellent swordsmen, and the duel promised to be a long one. Back and forth they swayed, dodging a thrust and giving another in return, until at last Clarence became exasperated with the delay, when he swung his sword around his head three times and aimed a terrific blow at William's head. If

this had struck his antagonist it would have cut his head completely in two; but William Rupel noticed Clarence's action in time to prevent any harm being done, and before his step-brother was aware of it his sword flew into the air and fell at his feet.

"There, Clarence," said William, "I hope you are satisfied now. I could wound you if I desired to."

"No, I am not satisfied. We fight until either you or I die!" cried Clarence, with rage, as he picked up his weapon, and before William could avoid it, he dealt him a deadly thrust in the side. The weapon went completely through William Rupel's body, and with a cry of agony he fell to the ground at his step-brother's feet.

"I guess I have killed him," said Clarence, coolly, as he drew his sword out of the wound, put on his overcoat, and turned to his second, to whom he spoke as follows:

"I will have to ship, now that I have killed him. The train leaves for London at two o'clock, and if we hurry we can catch it and be miles away before the authorities know anything about this affair. Come."

Without waiting to ascertain what might be the result, he led the way to the station, and he and his second were soon out of sight.

When William fell, Mr. Hoffman and the surgeon bent over him to find out how serious the wound was.

"I am afraid that this is fatal," said the surgeon, after a close examination.

"Let us carry him to the Hall," said Mr. Hoffman.

The surgeon and the curate lifted William up, after they had tied bandages around the wound to stop some of the flow of blood, and then carried him to his room. The curate left the surgeon alone with his friend, and went back to the place where the duel had been fought. He picked up the swords, and after he had covered up the blood-stains with snow, he went back to the abbey. Until dawn the surgeon and the curate worked with their wounded friend, and were at last rewarded to see him open his eyes, and ask for a drink of water.

"He is conscious now," said the surgeon, as he took Hoffman aside. "If he is kept perfectly quiet, and not allowed to excite himself, he may pull through. The wound is a serious one, and if the sword had cut an inch higher it would have cut the heart, and he would now be dead. Watch by his side for a few hours, when I will return and relieve you."

The surgeon then gave William some medicine which caused him to fall into a quiet slumber, and after giving the curate some directions, he left the house.

It was not long after the physician left William's room, before there came a rap at the door, which was immediately answered by the curate, who found it was his friend's valet.

"Please, sir, I beg yer pardon, but the sick woman wants to see his lordship," said the man, as he entered.

"What does she want?" inquired the curate.

"She is very weak, and the nurse says that she thinks she is dying. Lady Anne is in the room with the woman."

"You stay here and watch your master, while I go and see if she is really as bad as you think."

With that Hoffman left the room, and proceeded immediately to the room where Madge Babbington lay dying.

As he entered the apartment a curious and exciting scene met his gaze. He found Lady Anne struggling with the sick woman, and trying to tear something from her hand.

"Lady Anne, you shan't have these papers unless you promise me solemnly that you will deliver them to Sir William," cried Madge, gasping for breath.

"I won't promise you anything!" exclaimed her ladyship. "Those papers are mine; they belonged to my husband. Neither you nor William have any right to them."

"They interest Sir William, and not you. His father's will is here, and he ought to have it."

"I tell you he shan't have it; it must be destroyed for my son's sake."

"It must not be destroyed for my—I mean Sir William's sake."

"If you don't give them to me, I will strangle you to death!" yelled her ladyship, and at the same time she grasped Madge by the throat and commenced to carry out her threat.

"Hold, Lady Anne! What would you do?" exclaimed Mr. Hoffman, stepping forward and pushing Lady Anne aside.

"What right have you to interfere in this matter?" demanded her ladyship in a towering rage as she faced the curate, who was now bending over the sick woman.

"The right of any person to stop you or any one else from committing a fearful crime."

"Do you dare to say that I would commit a crime?"

"I dare say anything. I am Sir William's friend, and I am here to protect his interests. Your ladyship is not aware of what you were about to do." At this point Madge raised herself in the bed, and with a desperate effort said to Hoffman:

"You say that you are Sir William Rupel's friend. I give these papers to you and beg of you to deliver them safely to him. Where is he now?"

"He is asleep in his room."

"I want to see him."

"It will be impossible for him to come to you now as he is sick, an accident having happened to him last night while he was on his way from the village."

"Take those papers and tell him that——"

Further utterance was cut off by a hemorrhage,

(To be continued)

SWIFT RETRIBUTION

BY LIZZIE HYER NEFF

"THERE!" chuckled Teddy, when he had snapped the carriage door and settled back in the seat beside his bride. "We've managed that pretty slick. I have a great head when it comes to beating the fellows."

"Of course you have," murmured Lillie, admiringly.

"You see, I threw them all off the scent by making them think the wedding was to be after the holidays, and I bound everybody who had to know about it to the deepest secrecy. I even took the trunk down this morning and checked it myself, for fear they would send it to Nebraska as we did Harris'. No, the fellows are beaten this time."

"It was very clever of you. And you have always been a leader in the jokes on the others so that they would make it interesting for us, I fear. I never could stand it, the ridicule and the publicity—you know. It was very thoughtful of you on that account."

"Nobody has the faintest idea of it. Walker was quizzing me the other day, but I made him think that it might never come off, and I had the ring in my pocket then. Well, here we are at the station. Twenty minutes more and we shall be safe from the fiends. Won't they be sold when they see the papers?"

Lillie laughed at the thought, and they went down-stairs to the waiting-room. At the door they ran against Burt, one of the young men in the same railroad office as Teddy.

"Why, hello, Burt," exclaimed Teddy, with effusion. "Going somewhere?"

"No," replied Burt, with a queer smile; "I just came down to see a friend off. Where are you going?"

"I? Oh, Miss Hill here is going East, and I am going down a few stations with her," responded the artful bridegroom.

"Indeed! Well, hadn't you better take your—take her into the ladies' room? There's such a crowd out here," and Burt led the way to the door, and ushered the pair into the large, well-filled room.

There were some vacant seats in a corner, and Teddy headed in their direction. As he passed the middle row of seats across the long room, their occupants all rose as one person, and Teddy recognized them as his office mates, while a cold chill crept over him. What could bring them there in a body? They approached and crowded around the young couple. "We heard that you were going to start on a journey to-day, old fellow, and we thought you might feel hurt if we neglected to see you off," said Morris, a young married man, extending his hand. The others asked where he was going and when he would return in the most merciless manner, and finally hemmed him in and pushed him along to Lillie, who had found a seat, until he was at her side. Just as it seemed that he would be compelled to introduce them to her, his train was called, and he eagerly caught up their joint satchel and remarked:

"Well, good-by, boys, that's my train."

The young men accompanied him, and, to his consternation, walked by the gateman with a smile, and followed him close out to the drawing-room car. He helped his wife up the steps and turned to the boys in desperation: "Much obliged for your trouble, boys; very kind of you, I'm sure, to come down like this. Good-by, good-by!"

"Oh, we mean to see you through, old fellow. So many of us are indebted to you for past attentions we will not shirk when it comes your turn." So they followed the couple into the coach and gathered around their chairs. Teddy seated himself in trembling anticipation. Burt stepped forward and begun a high-flown little speech, in a high, clear voice and a bland manner. The passengers all listened with deep attention.

"For heaven's sake, come off, boys!" implored Teddy in a low tone. "It's on me! Mention your treat and it's yours. I'll never do it again."

Burt was saying something about a "slight testimonial," and thereupon he produced from somewhere a large black jug labeled "molasses," in tall white letters, and presented it with a flourish. Harris added an immense tin dish-pan, with the remark that he believed in useful presents. Walker contributed a large pumpkin, and Rohmer a broom decorated with white ribbon and the traditional couplet. There were twelve of the volunteer escorts, and their gifts were all of such a bulky nature that the blushing young couple were literally buried under a mountain of kitchen commodities, to the intense amusement of their audience. There were a feather duster, a rolling-pin, two cabbages, a clothes-hamper, a rat-trap, and a coal-scuttle among the visible gifts.

The poor little bride was scarlet with mortification, and Teddy, who had so often invented novel schemes for the torment of his newly married

friends, now sat wondering if the boys saw anything funny in this performance. But whether they did or not, the passengers certainly enjoyed it hugely. The train would stop twenty minutes at Cleveland, so there was time for a good deal of ceremony.

After the escort had withdrawn from the "Grenada," they stopped on the outside and executed a yell, composed for the occasion, which, energetically rendered from twelve lusty throats, fairly made the roof of the old Union depot ring. It ran:

"Rickety, rickety rue! Slim, slam, bazoo!
Cleveland, Cleveland, O-h-i-o!
What's the matter with Teddy Rogers?
He got married! Who got married?
Teddy Rogers!"

Several hundred people stopped on their way to and from trains to learn the cause of this demonstration, and smiled when a shower of rice tinkled over the Grenada and through the open windows.

A dense crowd, laughing uproariously, was gathered around something on the platform.

Meanwhile, Teddy was trying to extricate himself from his embarrassment of riches. He went out and arranged with the porter to throw the mementoes from the platform as soon as the country was reached, and—for a consideration—that serious and dignified personage immediately removed them.

When the young couple were settled and the train was flying through the eastern suburbs of the city, Lillie recovered enough to say: "How did they ever find out?"

"It must have been mind reading," replied her lord, "for there wasn't any other possible way. I am sorry now that we didn't have a big wedding. We have had all the tribulations. We might have had the pleasure and profit as well."

"Well, the annoyance is all over now. "We'll just forget it," said the philosophical bride, and so they did, and enjoyed the pleasant ride through the autumn afternoon, with the glowing country on one side and the blue lake on the other. From Buffalo they went up to Niagara Falls for a night and a day, and then on to New York. By this time the recollection of their ovation had grown quite dim. Their objective point was the home of Lillie's aunt, in a most aristocratic and exclusive suburb of New York, twelve miles out in New Jersey. They arrived at the station of this town during the morning rush, when all the male population was taking the train for the city. Teddy took his bride to the waiting-room until he found a carriage, gave the driver his check, and then handed Lillie into the neat coupé. The driver went after the baggage and stayed for some time, and meanwhile something was causing a good deal of merriment on the platform. "I had better go and look after that trunk myself," said the young man, stepping out. "He must be having some trouble to find it."

A dense crowd, laughing uproariously, was gathered around something on the platform, and Teddy went down and squeezed his way to the center to see the cause. It was easily apparent.

The usually careless handlers of baggage had this time tenderly lifted a new trunk from the baggage car and set it out alone. Its appearance was so ludicrous that the young man laughed heartily. "Somebody else has attentive friends beside me," he thought, as he pressed nearer.

"I wonder who is the owner of that property," remarked a gentleman, standing by him.

Teddy leaned over and read the name on the end of the trunk. He had ordered it there himself. It was "Theodore E. Rogers, Cleveland, O." He gave a little gasp. "Whoever he is, I should think he would hate to claim it," remarked the gentleman. "Very funny, isn't it?"

"Oh, very," answered the owner dreamily.

There was a large placard on top, which read:

"TO ALL RAILROAD MEN!

"The owner of this trunk is a railroad man, and is on his wedding trip. Any attention on the part of brother railroad men in the shape of small souvenirs will be greatly appreciated. THE COMMITTEE."

The request had been complied with all along the line, and souvenirs had been generously attached. They had been applied with railroad glue, which retains its hold like grim Death. One placard read: "Be careful of this trousseau. It is Teddy and Tootsy on their wedding trip." An-

other, "Go light with this trunk. It contains a skeleton!"

Some one had also applied a few pounds of rice with the same tenacious medium to every inch of the surface not otherwise decorated. Between Buffalo and Albany eleven old shoes had been fastened to the handles with insulated electric-light wire. Nine empty beer bottles were also fastened on with wire railroad seals. At Jersey City a bird cage, a live rooster, a pup and a doll had been added, and an elaborate festooning of white ribbon. The driver of Teddy's carriage was assisting the public to decipher the inscriptions. As he caught sight of his employer's face, he exclaimed, apologetically: 'Oi couldn't git it out av the crowd, sor. And I t'ought I'd be after takin' the live things off it, sor." "Take them all off," said Teddy, and the crowd turned to look at him. A young man with glasses took out a camera and leveled it at the unhappy traveler. "That is the representative of the Associated Press," cheerfully volunteered Teddy's neighbor. Teddy retreated to his coupé. "Can't he find the trunk?" asked Lillie. "Oh, yes! He's found it. I wish he hadn't!" groaned the young husband.

A train pulled out for the city just then, and the crowd was reduced. The young couple waited in the coupé for a miserable quarter-hour, during which curious people walked up and down to get a glimpse of the proprietors of the remarkable trunk. Then the driver appeared, saying: "Indade, sor, I can't get a wan av thim things off. "They're put there for kapes, they are, sure."

"Then we must go back to New York and dispose of that trunk somehow. We can never take such a thing to Aunt Margaret's," said Lillie, decidedly.

Teddy had it rechecked, and they took the next train, which went in twenty minutes. Arrived in New York, Teddy paid a man a good price to take the trunk to a hotel in a covered wagon, and after much tribulation it was sent up to his room.

They sent a telegram to Mrs. Halsted, telling her they would not arrive there before the next morning, purchased a new trunk, and transferred their wardrobe to it.

On the following morning they drove up to Mrs. Halsted's aristocratic door, and were cordially received. "I was much alarmed about you yesterday, until I received your telegram," she said.

"We were very sorry that it was necessary to disappoint you," replied Teddy, who had just been introduced to this new relative, "but at the last moment we were detained in New York by—by a —little business matter that—was quite imperative—ah!"

A queer little smile hovered over the lady's polite face for a moment as she replied, and then, as she turned to Lillie, Teddy glanced sidewise at a morning paper, which had evidently been tossed upon the table at their arrival. There was a showy illustration in sight, and he moved slightly to read the headlines of the accompanying article. They were:

Great Joke. Was Played on an Ohio Married Couple. Their Baggage Covered With Placards. The Oddest Trunk That Ever Reached New York. Belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Rogers of Cleveland, O.

The illustration was an alleged portrait of himself, his wife, and the trunk.

ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS

THE Pyramid of Khufu, though the oldest of the Seven Wonders, is the only one now standing. It is at Gizeh, on the western side of the Nile, a short trolley ride from Cairo.

Its builders was the Pharaoh Khufu, or Cheops, the date of whose reign is uncertain, some writers putting it at from 3969 to 3908 B. C., others about ten centuries later. He erected it as a tomb for himself—a tomb that should surpass all others in magnificence, that should defy the most skillful grave-robber and endure as long as Time.

To obtain workers for this monument Khufu closed the temples and added their tens of thousands of priests and attendants to the ranks of the workers. These were divided into three gangs of 100,000 men each, one gang working for three months while the other two supplied them with food. Their only pay was food and clothing, and taskmasters urged them on with whips.

It covered thirteen acres of ground, its base a perfect square measuring 756 feet on each side, and was 481 feet high. (The Metropolitan Tower, New York, is 700 feet, 3 inches high.) It was built of limestone covered with granite. About 2,300,000 blocks of stone, averaging two and one-half tons in weight, were used in it. The mortar was scarcely thicker than a sheet of paper.

The surface was polished till it shone like a mirror. All the smooth surface stones have long since been removed, and it is believed that the mosque of Sultan Hassan, in Cairo, is largely built of them.

Under the pyramid, carved deep in the rock, was a burial chamber, reached by a sloping passage 317 feet long. This was intended to fool grave-robbers, for Khufu was not buried there. From this passage another led upwards, and then horizontally to the "queen's chamber," another trap for robbers. From the latter passage a third ran up to the exact center of the pyramid, where was the royal chamber with walls of polished granite. Above this again were smaller chambers. A stone sarcophagus stands empty in the royal chamber to this day. King Khufu may have been buried here and his mummy stolen, but the place has been empty since it was first explored.

CURRENT NEWS

SMALLEST MAN IS REJECTED

Atley West, of Mokane, Mo., twenty-five years old, and probably the smallest man in the South, was examined for the army and was rejected. West is 54⅝ inches high and weighs 57½ lbs. He passed all tests but weight and height.

FIND PREHISTORIC MAN IN MEXICO CITY

The remains of a prehistoric man have been found near Mexico City buried under three meters of volcanic lava. It is supposed that the remains are at least 10,000 years old, as the oldest records of Mexico make no mention of an eruption of the Volcano Ajusco.

CAUGHT GOLDEN EAGLE IN TRAP.

D. M. Letson, of Hayward, Wis., has a golden eagle which he caught in a trap on the Brunet River. The big bird had for more than a month been robbing the traps of bait, and the trapper set about to catch the eagle. There are not many golden eagles left in the country, and it is only occasionally that one is seen in Wisconsin. This is one of very few ever caught in a steel trap. With its wings outstretched the bird measured eight feet. The head is covered with a cluster of beautiful golden-colored feathers.

WOMAN CAPTURES A WOLF

Mrs. Bertha Fox, a farmer's wife living west of McGregor, Iowa, captured a full-grown gray wolf alive, with her hands, and brought it home. The animal became caught in a wire fence and was unable to extricate itself. It was thin and evidently weak from exhaustion and hunger. Taking it by the back of the neck and the back, so that it could not bite her, the woman carried it home. The bounty amounted to $20.

TOMBSTONES TO MARK CLAIMS

Tombstones are being used for location monuments in the new mining district near Sodaville, Nev., where a fabulously rich ledge of tungsten ore was discovered recently, according to reports brought to Reno by men who answered the call of the desert and rushed to get some of the claims. One miner located the village cemetery, and as there were no rocks near he used some of the best-looking tombstones to mark the boundaries of his claim. Others soon followed suit, and now the relatives of the departed, interred there years ago, would have a hard time recognizing one grave from another.

ELECTRICALLY-DRIVEN SHEARS

Among the recent developments in tool electrification is a line of electrically operated scissors and shears. One manufacturer is now offering scissors in various sizes, operated by a small motor through an eccentric drive, and tinners' snips in various sizes, operated by an electric motor through a worm gear. These tools need only be guided by the worker, and because of the elimination of the muscular effort required to operate the blades, a greater quantity of work can be done in a given time.

FISH BECAME INTOXICATED.

The waters of Stony Creek, one mile south of Noblesville, Ind., sizzled and foamed the other day and the jingle of breaking glass echoed in the distance. The fish became intoxicated and wriggled around on the surface like water flies on a hot August evening. Five thousand bottles of beer and twenty-five gallons of whiskey were emptied into the stream by the sheriff on the order of the court. The liquor represented an accumulation that was taken in "blind tiger" raids.

ISLAND MOVING DOWN RIVER

Ed Scheibe, caretaker at the Eagles' Nest Camp, came to Alton, Ill., to inform the owners of the camp that the island was coming toward Alton. According to the story he told, the head of the island is being cut off by the river and more dirt is being added to the foot of the island. This process is going on at the rate of several feet per month. The island is six miles above Alton. According to the way the caretaker has it figured, Eagles' Nest, if it keeps on for the next 1,000 years at the rate it is slipping at the present time, will be directly opposite Alton.

SNAKE FOR A MASCOT

Company G, Second Washington State Infantry, of Aberdeen, if allowed to do so, will take a mascot to France that will raise the hair on the heads of the Allied troops as well as those of the Teutons. The mascot is a bull snake.

The snake has been a pet with the company outposts in the Cascade Mountains. One soldier discovered the snake in deadly battle with a large rattler. It killed the rattler, and a few minutes later, when attacked, killed a second rattler. The soldiers thought its fighting ability should be recognized, and captured it.

SIGHT RESTORED BY A CAT.

A remarkable case of restoration of sight due to shock has occurred at Torquay, England, according to Our Dumb Animals. Rifleman Charles Appleby of the Royal Irish Rifles, was severely wounded at Ypres, gassed, blinded and buried under sandbags for fifteen hours. He was in hospital for months, and had to have two silver plates in his skull. He was sitting at dinner recently in a boarding house to which he had been invited, when a cat sprang onto the top of his head, causing him to drop a glass onto a plate.

When the cat had been removed he surprised the company by saying: "What a lovely Persian cat!" and it was discovered that he had regained the sight of his left eye. Rifleman Appleby has accepted the cat as a present.

ANIMALS IN STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Chancellor Prescott, of Carlisle, England, a few years ago refused to pass the designs for a stained-glass window for the cathedral because a dog figured in it. "It would provoke ridicule," he said. Whereupon a whole menagerie of animals in the churches, in the windows, carvings and mosaics were reported from various parts of the country.

A window in a chapel at Ashbridge depicts Tobias and Sara in bed, with a dog asleep on the quilt; cats playing violins may be seen in Wells and Hereford cathedrals, and bears playing organs, drums and bagpipes are prominent in the zoological collection which makes St. Botolph's, Boston ("The Stump"), peculiarly interesting to visitors.

FIRST TYPEWRITER PATENTED IN 1714

The typewriter, whose intrusion into the law courts is resented by the scriveners, is not quite so modern as most folk imagine. So long ago as January 17, 1714, there was granted to a Mr. Mills, an engineer in the employ of the New River Company, a patent for an invention described by him as 'an artificial machine for the impressing or transcribing of letters singly or progressively, one after another as in writing, whereby all letters may be engraved on paper or parchment so neat and exact as not to be distinguished from print."

Unfortunately, no drawings were submitted with the specifications, so that it is impossible now to describe further the first typewriter.

GOLD IN FRUIT JAR.

Michael Toszyniak, twenty-eight years old, was found in the railroad yards, Milwaukee, Wis., by an officer. He was charged with trespassing. Toszyniak broke away from the officer, and as he did so the policeman noticed he threw an object to the side of the tracks. When this was recovered it proved to be a fruit jar containing $350 in gold.

In the district court Toszyniak told Judge Page that he had saved the money, and besides that he had $900 in the bank. He told the court he did not place the money in the bank because he did not want to take a half day off to do so.

Judge Page advised him to take the rest of the day off and see that the money was deposited. Toszyniak was fined $5 and costs.

SPIRIT WORLD SENDS ADVICE OF MINE

The third day's session of the twenty-fifth annual convention of the National Spiritualists' Convention the other night in the grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, evoked a huge pile of messages which John Slater purported to read. A large audience which filled the room had been keyed up to enthusiasm by the preceding speaker, who revealed the mysteries of the religion, and was always eager to applaud Mr. Slater's "communion with the dead."

He advised one of the audience that a mine in the Cascade Mountain of Washington was valuable and that the person interested was not to worry, that "everything was O. K. and all right," that the message of the late father, with whom Mr. Slater spoke, was to the effect that he still had faith in the mine.

THE SIXTH SENSE

Scientists long ago decided that the dog has a sixth sense. Many human beings also seem to possess this additional faculty. As proof that a dog has an extra sense it is pointed out that on many occasions dogs have been carried far from home, only to escape and return at the first opportunity. This, it is argued, cannot be explained as a sense of direction alone. It is something more, scientists are convinced. Every one has seen instances of a dog picking out its master from a crowd of people. This might be attributed to the dog's keen sense of smell, but the question is at least debatable.

So far as human beings are concerned, many of us have known persons who apparently possessed a canny faculty of foreseeing certain events. This might be explained by saying that they had an unusual gift of intelligence, or were governed by the lessons of past experience. But it is easy to cite instances where persons of no special intelligence have seemed to "feel" a coming event of which they had no previous knowledge and which did not lay within the scope of their experience. This ability to "feel" things is given to all of us in some degree. For instance, we easily know who are our friends and enemies, although no spoken word may have been passed that would prove either assumption. Many of us seem to "feel" the approach of danger or good fortune.

In trying to explain this strange mental phenomena scientists have turned to the dog as an animal that undoubtedly has a sixth sense. Now, the question becomes—what is this sixth sense?

A THRILLING RESCUE.

Only a mother's heroic daring, prompted by love for her child, saved the life of the two-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Pondus, at their home in New Berlin, Pa. The little girl was playing and the cistern floor was uncovered. She shouted into it, as she took great delight in hearing the echo, and lost her balance.

The mother heard the child's faint cries and, calling to a neighbor, "Rescue me!" leaped into the well. It is about eleven feet deep, and held a foot of icy water. The child was very cold when her mother lifted her from the chilly water and held her in her arms. Soon the neighbors arrived, and a rope was lowered to them.

Wrapping the lifeline around her body with one arm and holding her child in the other, the heroic mother was rescued.

SAVING ELK FROM EXTINCTION

Gradually the elk of the Northwest are being rescued from extinction. Four years ago a herd was found starving to death in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This led the Oregon State Fish and Game Commission to initiate a movement to stimulate the propagation of elk. The first step was to secure the necessary permission and then to bring fifteen of them to the northeastern part of the State, where they were placed in an inclosure, possessing natural land advantages, and surrounded by a ten-foot fence.

The original herd, which has been raised at an elk farm at the little town of Enterprise, Ore., has increased to quite a size, and the State makes occasional distribution of the stock to hunting preserves, noted for their abundance of timber, food and water. Deer and bear are also plentiful, attracting sportsmen, but the elk heretofore have been scarce. Incidentally, the elk propagation is in line with the policy of the commission, which stocks the mountain streams in Northeastern Oregon with various species of trout and salmon, replenished each year from a local hatchery.

These periodical distributions of young elk present quite a problem in transportation, for Enterprise, where the farm is located, is forty-five miles from the railroad. They are brought to the station in specially constructed crates, fitted up with snow runners. They are usually sent by express, because the animals have to have personal attention en route. A typical shipment of this sort was made recently to Chiloquin, in Klamath County, some distance from Portland. They had to be trapped at the farm and put into the snow sled crates, brought forty-five miles to the railroad and then be led into a corral, through which they could be driven into the cars.

At Chiloquin the animals were again put into crates and after being driven into a mountainous country eighteen miles away from civilization they were released to roam about at their own sweet will. The State expects to continue this enterprise, liberating small herds each year, or whenever the growth of the farm will permit it.

GHOSTS ON THE BATTLEFIELDS.

Ever since the war began there have been persistent tales from the battle-front of ghosts that stalked abroad at night, sometimes in whole companies. Despite the incredulity with which these stories were at first received, the men who had seen what they believed to be wraiths, insisted so strongly that their statements have come to be more than half believed. Many a French soldier has been positive that he saw Joan of Arc riding between the lines, waving aloft the sword of victory. British soldiers have been equally positive that they saw St. George and The Cross hovering over the field.

Now comes Prof. Charles E. Munroe of George Washington University, who is an explosives expert for the government, and says that these ghosts may be quite real, after all. Professor Munroe offers an explanation that is highly interesting.

Phosphorus always is luminous in the dark. A man's body contains about fifty-five ounces of phosphorus. Upon a hard-fought field, where many bodies lay exposed, this phosphorus would begin to rise after a time. A warm night would be especially favorable for a spectral performance. Suppose that a gentle wind was blowing, gathering just enough of the phosphorus together to look like a woman or saint with flowing robes. Every zephyr would seemingly move these robes, giving the impression of walking or dancing. This probably is the reason why all ghosts are represented as being wrapped in a sheet.

The No Man's Land between the trenches would be the very place where a procession of wraiths might be expected. With many bodies lying about, some of them long unburied, the amount of phosphorus passing into the air would be considerable. It is easy to conceive of a war-worn soldier mistaking some strange shape of the night for the revered Joan or the knightly George. What more natural than that his brain should evoke a memory of his nation's most heroic spirit, clothing it anew with a ghostly form.

The late Prof. W. J. McGee once undertook to establish the truth of many stories about a haunted graveyard. Going there at night, he seated himself on a flat tomb and waited. For a long time nothing happened; then he seemed to see a draped figure moving before his eyes a few yards away. Gripping his courage, the professor advanced, ready to grapple with anything that he might encounter. But there was nothing to bar his way. He could no longer see the figure.

Returning to his tomb, the professor once more made out the ghostly visitor. Watching it carefully, he decided that it was a kind of vapor, and examination the next day showed that there was an open grave near by, from which phosphorus fumes probably had escaped. This, in all likelihood, is the simple explanation of the age-old belief that spirits wander about graveyards at night.

RARE MASTODON FOUND

The American Museum of Natural History announced that it had purchased the first mountable skeleton of a new species of mastodon of the Tertiary period. The newly found variety, which is yet to be named, is distinguished by a jaw much longer than that of any of the Tertiary mastodons known.

It is held that the find is another evidence that there once existed an Alaskan land bridge over which animals of a prehistoric age passed from Asia to North America. It is regarded as a descendant of a race of European mastodons, the skeleton of one of which is now on exhibition in the Museum of Natural History in Paris. In the Western Hemisphere, however, the long-jawed mastodon attained greater size than did the European variety. This animal stood eight feet high and its bones are very massive. The skeleton is practically complete. It was unearthed in Texas.

HELD BY DEVILFISH.

Richard Hernage and Olaf Oak had an experience recently with a devilfish that they are not likely to forget. The battle was fought ten miles out at sea, off Malibu Point, Cal.

The men were fishing from the 30-foot gasoline launch *Sea Lion* when they suddenly became aware of the tentacles of the fish encircling the boat. They tried with bare hands to throw the tentacles off, fearing that the boat might be dragged to the bottom. Instead, the fish pinioned their arms.

Oak had a sheath-knife in his pocket, and Hernage seized a boat-hook, the only weapon within reach. In the limited space they hacked at the tentacles until they got out of reach, and by maneuvering Oak got an ax and fought the fish until it was subdued. The battle lasted two hours, and the men were so exhausted they were unable to start the engine.

As they regained their strength they rowed the boat to shore and then sought doctors for their poisoned and wounded bodies. What was left of the devilfish still clinging to the boat weighed 130 pounds.

COURIERS RUN 90 MILES A DAY.

Travelers who return from the remote interior of vast countries, where telegraphs and railways are practically unknown, will tell you of the astounding swiftness with which news travels, despite the seeming absence of facilities.

Way in the wilds of the Tibetan border, or in the Mongolian deserts, two months' journey from civilization and hundreds of miles from the nearest telegraph wire, the traveler will perchance hear of some momentous event in the outside world within an incredibly short while of its happening. How is it done?

There is really no mystery about it. This rapid transmission of news is due to human, not superhuman, agency. It is the work of natives employed in courier services of higher organization than we have ever dreamed.

China, that spacious land where distance is measured by days, not miles, affords the best example. For, although the means of communication by rail and telegraph have greatly developed there of late, the bulk of the interior is still virgin to these inventions of the "foreign devil," and China still maintains what has been from time immemorial the most wonderful courier service in the world.

It is now mainly controlled by the Chinese post-office, and the mileage of the courier lines has recently reached the stupendous figure of 136,000, or about five and a half times the circumference of the globe. By road, river and track, radiating from the capital of Pekin, or other important centers, legions of couriers are speeding, without ceasing, by night and by day, to almost every corner of the 5,000,000 square miles of country which form the Chinese Empire.

The couriers are all stalwart men, especially chosen for their physique, powers of endurance and knowledge of routes, says the Philadelphia *Enquirer*. They work in relays, eat as they go along, and are supposed not to stop until they have handed the mail-bag to the next relay. An average speed of ninety miles a day is often maintained.

INDIAN SUPERSTITIONS.

India's population is 325,000,000. Practically all the races and religions of the world are represented. Ninety-eight and six-tenth per cent. of the people cannot read or write. Four per cent. of the inhabitants eat regular meals. The remainder eat when they can and where they can. The average native in India lives on less food each day than any other human being in the world, says *Leslie's Weekly*. Religious prejudices are intense. Men willingly die rather than submit to some dismembering surgical operation, for did not Allah command them to appear before him as they left him to come into the world? The Buddhists will not eat meat or take even a medicine derived from an animal. They died by millions during the bubonic plague rather than take a prophylactic serum made from pepsin and beef broth—because the pig from which pepsin was obtained was unclean to the Mohammedan and Hindu, and the killing of this animal and the bull from which the broth was made was against the tenets of the Buddhist faith. I knew an editor in Poona, India, to absolutely refuse a $3,000 yearly advertisement of a patent medicine because it contained pepsin.

While men earn small daily wages—sometimes as low as four cents—yet it has been estimated by the government authorities that India's native population purchases foreign-made goods each year to the extent of $1.91 per head. This amounts to over $60,000,000 annually.

Indians are fond of sweets, and last year imported over $40,000,000 worth of sugar. Clothing is made chiefly from cotton.

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